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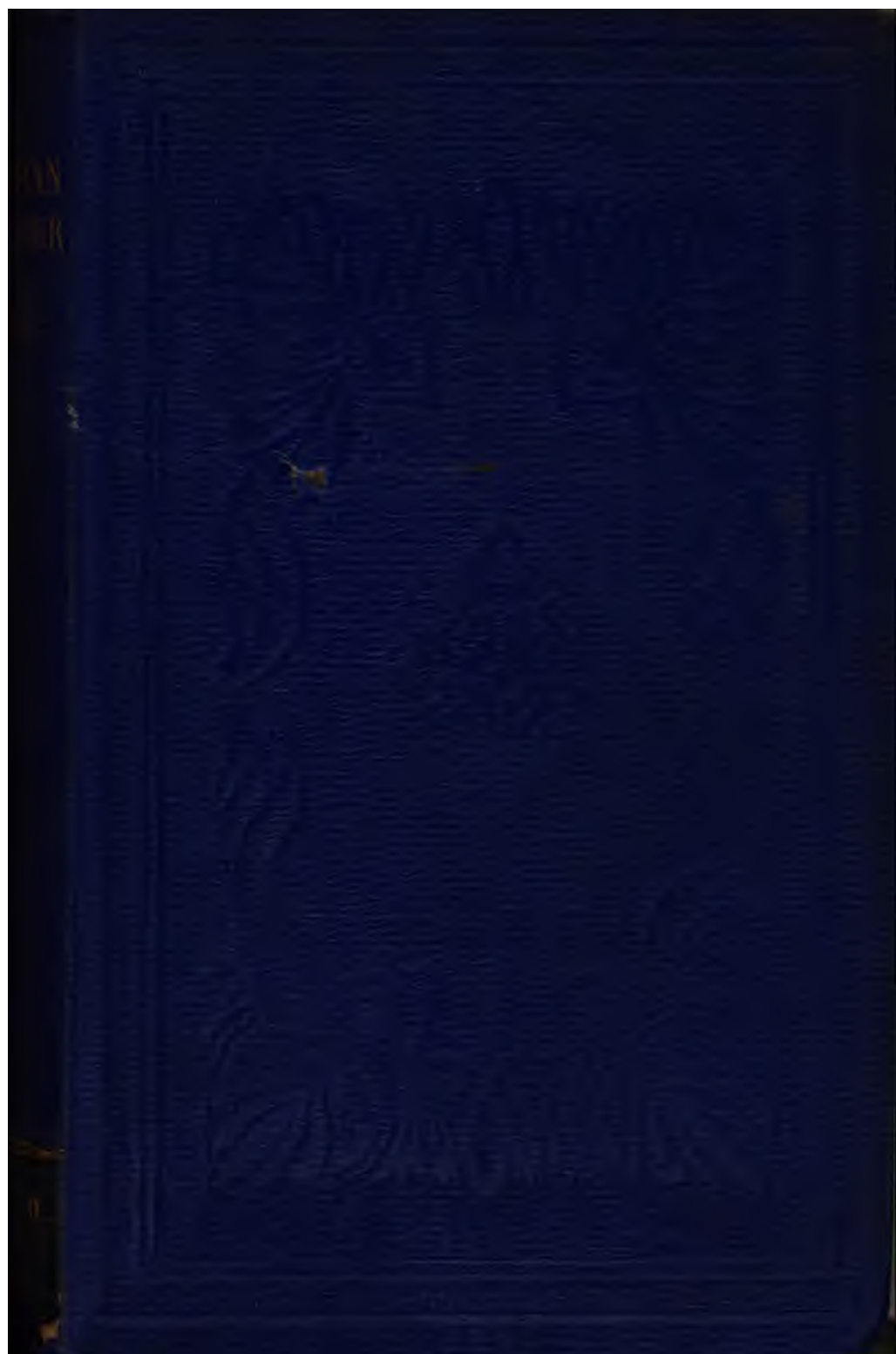
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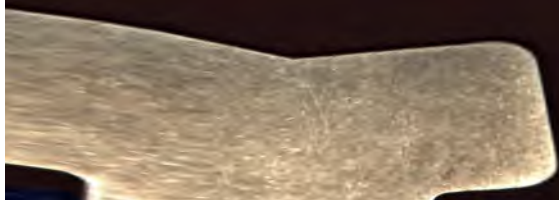
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THE
NEAPOLITAN COMMANDER,

A ROMANCE OF SEA & LAND.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY C. F. ARMSTRONG,

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"THE CRUISE OF THE DARING," &c.

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THE NEAPOLITAN COMMANDER.

CHAPTER I.

THE individual seated at the head of the long table, at which were collected the members of the secret society of Carracioli, had been formerly a colonel in the Neapolitan army, and had served under General Mack, a name of calamitous celebrity. When this General marched upon Rome, with the Neapolitan army, accompanied by the King, Colonel Frugoni commanded one of the regiments of Cavalry, but in the first engagement with

Championet, the revolutionary general, he and his whole regiment turned their backs and fled; and, though General Mack was partly successful, and entered Rome, he and his whole army were forced to scamper back to Naples as fast as the light heeled Neapolitans could run. Colonel Frugoni was disgraced and dismissed the army, though he offered to prove that it was his men who fled, and that he followed to bring them back, but as he did not rejoin the army afterwards, the excuse was not allowed. However, as the whole army in their turn fled, with the King at their head, he had the consolation of knowing he was not the only coward in the King's service.

When the King and his court took refuge on board Lord Nelson's ships, and Naples was triumphantly entered by the French, Charles Innocent Frugoni joyfully embraced the Republican party, and remained in Naples, whilst Cardinal Ruffo drove out the French, and restored Naples to the king. The cidevant Colonel pretended to join the Royalists, but

secretly, he was one of the Democratic conspirators.

Colonel Frugoni was a bad, vicious, unprincipled man, and a coward—nevertheless, he was elected one of the ten chiefs of the conspirators who were now only waiting for the approach of the French army from Northern Italy, to commence a revolution in Naples, and seize upon the Royal family.

Charles Frugoni, as soon as Lieutenant Baracco had taken his seat, said to him, "this is joyful news we have received, Napoleon Bonaparte has passed the Alps, and gained a famous victory at Marengo. This battle," continued Frugoni, "will lead to the conquest of all Italy. The Austrian General, Melais, has retired behind the Minchio, and surrendered to France all the fortresses he had subdued; so in fact, Napoleon remains master of Piedmont, Lombardy, and Liguria. Besides this, he has insisted on every Austrian Prince being rooted out of Italy, and has assigned Tuscany to the Prince of Parma."

"This is news indeed," said Lieutenant Baracco, "and now I can account for this sudden resolve of King Ferdinand and his Court, to proceed to Palermo."

"What!" exclaimed several of the persons seated at the table, "is it the king's intention to quit Naples?"

"When did you hear that, Signor Baracco?" demanded the President Frugoni.

"Not three hours ago," returned Lieutenant Baracco, "and from one who had it from the Queen's lips—from Captain De Courcy, who has been recently appointed to the "Serene," in which frigate the court embarks."

"It is too bad," exclaimed several voices, "to see foreign minions in the highest posts in the kingdom; that minion and paramour of the Queen, Acton, governs the state as he wills; and now gives the command of our finest frigate to this boy, Captain De Courcy. No doubt his own son."

"That post ought to have been yours, Signor Baracco," said the President, "what

an opportunity it would have afforded for entrapping the whole Royal family."

"Could not the officers under this Englishman be bought?" asked a conspirator.

"No," said Lieutenant Baracco, bitterly, "they and all the men, late of the "Vesuvius," are devoted to him, his mad valour has gained him the admiration of a parcel of sycophants."

"By St. Janarius," said a loud, harsh voice, from the bottom of the table. "If this maladetto Englishman stands in our way, why not remove him? By all the saints, one would imagine that there was not a knife to be found in Naples, or a hand to use it."

It was Campobello, the Lazzaroni, who spoke, and the conspirators gave a murmur of applause."

"Campobello is quite right," said Frugoni, "he must be removed; he must not have the command of the "Serene," to take the king to Palermo; if he is removed the command would devolve on you, Baracco."

"Say but the word," cried Campobello, "and before this time to-morrow, he will cease to exist."

The President spoke in a low tone to Lieutenant Baracco, for a few minutes, and then said aloud, "We will put this proposal of Campobello to the vote."

There were twenty-one persons present, who all voted without hesitation, for the assassination of Hugh De Courcy, and the amount to be paid the vile perpetrators of the act if they succeeded. The Lazzaroni laughed at the idea of failure, with two thousand knives at his command.

"The first thing to be done," said the president, "is to send a trusty messenger to the commanders of the two French frigates off Civita Vechio. If they put to sea at once, and lie off the coast, they can, if you, Baracco, command the "Serene," capture her, together with Ferdinand and the Queen. Then hoist the tricolor, and, backed by Campobello's comrades, the city will be ours. The forts

will surrender, on the first summons, for the revolution once proclaimed, there are thousands ready to shout 'down with Ferdinand the imbecile.' "

After some further conversation, relative to their own private views, and the expectations of the conspirators, they separated, quitting the mansion one by one, and dispersing to their different homes.

The night of the Festa de Santa Maria Prede Grotto, drew to its close—the revellers had retired as the grey light of morning, struggled with the fading lustre of the illuminations; the sober citizens sought their couches—the Lazzarone theirs; from one year's end to the other, winter or summer, storm or calm, it was all the same, their couch was the stone steps of a palazzo, the portico of a church, beneath colonnades, or the lee side of a stone wall; they slept not on feather beds, or upon down, but they lived, married, reared up children; never worked; never troubled about the morrow; never even concerned themselves

what became of their bodies, when the grim destroyer claimed them in the end. An hour before sunrise, Naples slumbered; an hour after sunrise, the streets were again alive.

Hugh De Courcy had spent most of the night at the Villa Reale. Must we confess the truth, a great part of the time beside the beautiful Princess of Sorento—one of the most dangerous women amongst the Queen's favorites, for beauty and fascination of manner.

Clarina Obruza, Princess of Sorento, was passionately attached to the handsome Englishman, as the Neapolitan ladies called, Hugh De Courcy.

The Queen; at first, though De Courcy was an especial favorite with her, and even more so with the king, was somewhat opposed to the idea of the Princess bestowing—not her affections—but her hand and fortune upon one who was then styled a mere adventurer, gifted with, certainly, a singularly handsome person, most aristocratic manners, unquestionable courage, and extraordinary gallantry. Still for

a Princess, allied by blood with the royal house of Ferdinand of Naples, to bestow herself upon an unknown foreigner, let him have earned ever so great a character for gallantry and remarkable exploits, was rather a bold step. Yet, after a long conference with her minister, Sir John Acton, the Queen had said to the Princess, "it is possible the king may consent."

This occurred before De Courcy's departure to the siege of Genoa, when, we must admit, that being heart-whole, after releasing the princess from captivity, he had for a time, yielded to the fascinations of the dangerous and truly amiable widow. Still he made no declaration of love, but being very young, and somewhat susceptible, and mixing in so profligate a court, where the Queen set the example of licentiousness and familiar intercourse, he was led away by his own spirits and the beautiful Clarina's fascinations.

Clarina Obruzza, formerly Clarina de Crotono, was the only daughter and heiress of the Marchese de Crotono, a cousin to King

Ferdinand. Before her father's death she was betrothed to the immensely wealthy Prince of Sorrento, who owned large estates in Italy and Sicily.

Clarina was fifteen when she gave her hand to the Prince, who was exactly fifty-six, not a very likely period of life, for a gentleman to captivate so young and so lovely a girl as Clarina.

But marriages were not generally contracted for love amongst the nobility of Italy, on the contrary, love generally had little to do with articles of marriage.

Young ladies dreamed and thought of love afterwards; but to do Clarina justice, she was a virtuous wife, whilst that character lasted. The Prince was a kind, good man, and a fine cavalier for his years, and he was a fond husband; but he died three or four years after his marriage, leaving his young widow the entire of his noble property; as she was very young, he left her and his estates under the care of the king, till she should

reach her twenty-second year, when she would become her own mistress.

It may be supposed, that so young and beautiful a widow, connected with the royal family, and mistress of a princely fortune, at once became an object of immense attraction.

But Clarina Obruzza, Princess of Sorento, was firmly resolved that the next time she entered the marriage state, she would select a husband for herself, and marry for love and love alone.

The King and Queen were anxious that the Princess should, being connected with the royal blood of the King of the Two Sicilies, make a suitable match—and not one derogatory to her rank and station. So that when she had passed eighteen months of widowhood, the former proposed to her for a husband the Duke of ——, a nobleman possessing vast estates in Calabria, and one of the very highest of the Neapolitan nobles.

The young widow declined the proposal with a profound reverence ; and on Queen Caroline

Cavaleros, who called themselves her slaves, who swore by her eyes, wrote sonnets on the beauty of her hands and feet, &c.

Clarina began to waver, and Queen Caroline to see that a few months more gaiety would bring the young Princess to her way of thinking, when the event occurred already related, that again introduced De Courcy to her notice, and in a dangerous guise to a heart already prepossessed in his favour.

She had heard of his gallantry and his exploits amongst the corsairs of Barbary. She then beheld them. She witnessed his courage and his power, when he released her from the hands of the piratical rovers; and from that hour she secretly resolved if she could not have De Courcy's love, none other should have hers.

It may appear strange, that a young and lovely woman, almost a girl, with rank, wealth, and certainly an unblemished reputation, should find any great difficulty in winning a

young and dashing sailor's heart; and this same sailor, a mere dependent and protégé of the Queen's Minister

Most persons would imagine that Hugh De Courcy would have been dazzled, overpowered by the attentions and evident partiality of the beautiful Clarina, and would eagerly have followed up his good fortune; for already the partiality of the Princess had raised up against him a host of enemies, some really dangerous; his position and rapid advancement being already looked upon with exceeding envy. The elevation of so young a man, and a foreigner, created murmurs against the Queen and her minister's partiality, but they were unjust; his youth, De Courcy could not help, but his honors he deserved; for there was not an officer in the Neapolitan service, at all events, that could compete with him for brilliant services and real knowledge of his profession.

De Courcy certainly did not love the Princess Clarina; but admired her; and when near, was fascinated by her powers of pleasing,

for the princess had a charming, if not a powerful voice, was highly accomplished, and there is no doubt, would have made any man she really loved, and who loved her in return, a most amiable and charming wife.

But strange to say, De Courcy, reared as he had been, in foreign lands, frequenting and enjoying foreign society, was singularly English in his ideas and feelings; he was also somewhat romantic; and though aware that the beautiful Clarina had married a man nearly old enough to be her grandfather, merely performing a contract entered into by her parents, without her heart being concerned in the affair, in the slightest degree; yet there was something in her being a widow, distasteful to the young sailor. Besides, he was quite aware of her having been reared in, and habituated to, the customs and society of a most corrupt and licentious court; and he could scarcely bring himself to believe that her mind could remain pure and uncontaminated.

Thus, he refrained from allowing his heart

to become captive to the Princess's fascinations; when suddenly he was ordered to Genoa, in the "Vesuvius," to join Lord Keith's fleet.

On his return, when smarting under disappointed love, he again fell within the attractions of the Princess. We know not how things might have turned out had not events interfered.

On the night of the Festa de Santa Maria Predi Grotto, Hugh de Courcy left the Royal Palace at a later hour than Sir John and Lady Acton; taking his mantle from an attendant, he threw it over his shoulders, and proceeded to seek the hotel where he had resided from the period of his return to Naples.

The principal thoroughfares and the vicinity of the Royal Palace only were illuminated, the other streets had no light, except that derived from the full moon.

Our hero's hotel was the Villa de Roma, to reach which he had to proceed along the quay, which was still crowded; every ten or twelve yards, stalls and booths met his eye, roasting

and broiling perpetually going on ; water melons, in hundreds, exposed for sale ; vendors of maize were offering their golden ears to the numerous crowd of passers-by ; oysters were handed about with the wine of the country, to hundreds seated on the wooden benches before the stalls ; whilst guitar players and singers were merry with their melodies, for the chances of a small coin. At times the ear was stunned with cries of " Aqua gelata," a drink the Neapolitans are very fond of, with a little anniseed mixed up with it—for ice is ever grateful in their warm climate.

The young man passed along, quite unconscious that he was followed by a tall figure, in the ragged costume of the Lazzaroni, and that this man spoke to more than a dozen of his tribe that he passed on the way. Presently, as De Courcy turned into a street less frequented, and which led by a short cut to his hotel, a crowd of Lazzaroni, men, women, and girls, came, hand and hand, singing a Bacchanalian song, from a side street, and quite

encircled our hero, before he could avoid them. As this was often done during festivals, when the Lazzaroni became half intoxicated with wine, and they chanced to stumble on a cavaliero by himself, in order to extort some small coin, Captain De Courcy stood still, and put his hand into his pocket to draw out some silver ; in doing so his mantle fell back, displaying his court uniform ; just then the circle became gradually less, as they danced round him, the women and girls singing in chorus, when a wild shriek—one evidently of terror—from behind him, caused him to turn rapidly round. The movement saved his life—for the blow of a long poniard-shaped knife, aimed at his back, by a strong hand, glanced along his vest, tearing it open, and inflicting a mere scratch, came out again at his side. The hand that held the knife attempted to withdraw it, whilst several of the men made a rush at De Courcy, drawing their knives and cursing fiercely ; but our hero, with a sudden wrench, tore himself away from the ruffian

holding the knife, and, springing to one side, drew his sword. With wild shrieks and shouts the whole crew rushed, pell mell, up the street, one of the villains, as he fled, aiming a fierce blow at a young girl—one of the Lazzaroni, by her scanty dress, and felled her to the ground, bleeding from mouth and nose.

The noise and confusion of this scene brought many persons to the spot; but De Courcy drawing out the knife that had so narrowly escaped taking his life, stooped down and raised the girl, whose shriek, he judged, had saved his life.

“What is the matter, what has happened?” cried a multitude of voices; at the same time the speakers gathering round our hero, whose mantle had fallen to the ground, displaying his naval uniform to the crowd.

“Get some water,” he exclaimed to some women, gaily dressed, who crowded near “This poor girl is hurt.”

“Ah, St. Janarius,” said the women, “its only a Lazzaroni ragazza.” “She’ll come

too of herself, Signor Capitane," echoed several voices, "they are used to blows;" "but what has happened to you, Signor?" enquired some of the men.

Hugh De Courcy seized a vendor of "Aqua gelata," and, emptying his cooling beverage into a can, notwithstanding the grimaces of the owner, who was, however, appeased with a coin, four times the value of his entire evening's speculation, proceeded to wash the blood from the female's face, which was a remarkably beautiful one, though pale, and the eyes closed, and the complexion dark; but she came rapidly to herself, and then one of the bystanders called out,—

"Eh, per bacco, it's the daughter of the fierce Campobello, the Lazzaroni; come away neighbours, if you don't want a knife in your ribs. St. Janarius, he's a dangerous customer." In two minutes, De Courcy was alone with the girl, who could not be more than sixteen. She was clad in a very short, bright red petti-

coat ; her well formed foot and leg quite bare, a chemisette and a thin tattered scarf formed her entire clothing.

Ah, Santa Maria, where am I ?" she exclaimed, in a very sweet voice, looking wildly about her ; then seeing De Courcy, she sprang to her feet, and with the rag of a scarf she wiped away the blood that still flowed from her nostrils.

" Do not stay here, Signor," she hurriedly said, in pure Italian, " you will not be alive another ten minutes."

" Oh, do not be alarmed about me," said our hero, kindly, " I have my eyes about me, and my good sword in my hand, I should think little of a dozen such assassins ; but did not you utter the shriek that saved my life ?"

" Yes, Signor," answered the girl, shuddering, " you saved my life once, and I have saved yours now. May the saints still preserve you ; but go hence ;" and, suddenly turning round, she darted off down the street with the velocity of a fawn.

"Ha, by Jove, that's strange," cried De Courcy, half aloud. "I remember me now," and picking up his mantle, he hastened to his hotel, keeping the knife that had so nearly cut the thread of his existence.

CHAPTER II.

HUGH DE COURCY having gained his chamber in the hotel, Villa Roma, threw off his coat and examined the cut he had received. It was trifling; a little water and a piece of sticking plaister was all it required. But, thought our hero, it was a most providential escape. His next exclamation was, "To whom do I owe this pleasant remembrance?" and he took up the knife to examine it. It was a most formidable weapon—the blade, a keen

double-edged steel, about ten inches long and two broad, firmly embedded in a rough handle of horn; on this horn was a smooth part, and rudely cut on it were the letters "A.C."

"No doubt," thought De Courcy, "they stand for Antonio Campobello, the turbulent Lazzaroni of the Campo Formio. I have heard of this worthy, but why he should seek to assassinate me, is somewhat singular, for the Lazzaroni are certainly not the professional assassins of this good city of Naples; then this girl, who saved my life by her wild shriek, is his daughter—could it be her father that struck her down by so brutal a blow—for her sake I must let the ruffian escape the clutches of the law; yet, I would like to know the instigator of his vile act."

Hugh De Courcy, though he had no recollection whatever of the girl's features, remembered well the circumstance of saving a young girl's life, a short time before he proceeded to the bombardment of Genoa.

Walking along the mole head, after leaving

his gig, which returned to the "Vesuvius," then laying at anchor in the bay, he was attracted by screams from the sea, and, looking in the direction the sound, he perceived three persons struggling in the water; two of whom contrived to get on the bottom of a small boat, which had been capsized by a sudden squall. Throwing off his upper garments, he plunged in, and reaching the spot, caught a young girl by the hair, just as she was sinking, and kept her up till some boats pulled out to their rescue; the girl was insensible, but De Courcy was too humane to leave her—she was of the poorer class—to the care of the boatman, and had her carried on shore. The man and woman who clung to the boat, claimed the girl as their niece, she was carried to a small locanda, near the quay, and a surgeon sent for, and she was then well tended, and recovered; leaving a small sum of money for the girl's use, he proceeded to his hotel to change his own garments—from that hour he never thought more of the accident.

He now wondered how this girl, who spoke such pure Italian, could have remembered him—and he resolved to try and see her again, nay even to have a conference with the very ruffian who had attempted his life, supposing it was the Lazzaroni Campobello.

But, we know not what to-morrow may bring forth. The following day brought other circumstances into play, that entirely drove from his mind the attempt upon his life the night before.

He had scarcely finished his breakfast the next morning, when a domestic from Sir John Acton, summoned him to his guardian's presence.

In five minutes our hero was on his way to the mansion of the Prime Minister.

Sir John was pacing the chamber with an uneasy expression of countenance.

"So," said the Minister, pausing in his walk, and looking our hero kindly in the face, "So your life was attempted last night in the Stradi Del Monti. Thank God the ruffian

failed ;" and he held out his hand and seized that of De Courcy with considerable emotion.

"How on earth did you know that, dear sir?" said De Courcy, feeling much the kind manner of his protector.

"I should be badly served, Hugh," answered Sir John, "if I remained ignorant of such occurrences ; but sit down, I want to talk to you, for in half an hour you must start on board, and have the frigate in readiness to receive the King and Queen by sun-set."

"By sun-set," repeated De Courcy, "that's short notice."

"Don't be alarmed, they have been on board since daylight ; but I would not allow you to be disturbed. Now listen to me,—

"Your friend Baracco is a traitor."

The young man started to his feet, his face flushed, and his thoughts flying back to Genoa and Mary Wharton, like an electric shock, whilst he repeated—"Baracco a traitor—good God, a traitor, to whom?"

"To his King and country," replied Sir

John. "Listen, I have been aware for a long time that a society existed in this city calling themselves Caraccioli. Avengers, they first styled themselves, of that ill-starred prince—but, in fact, a society of blood-thirsty Democrats, whose whole aim is to overthrow the Government, massacre the Royal Family, and of course, all the King's ministers; let in the French, and, in the confusion, seize all they can. Their Majesties intend leaving Naples for Palermo, this evening, and during the absence of the Court, I am to take measures for the arrest of all the conspirators."

"But how is it possible," exclaimed De Courcy, "that Guiseppe Baracco is a conspirator? a man I placed such confidence in, and in whose friendship I trusted. What could be his inducement to turn traitor to his King?"

"I, of course, cannot explain to you all his motives, but I surmise a few. I know he has been a discontented man ever since you superseded him; and also when he failed in boarding the "Pluton," he afterwards applied for the

restoration of his father's forfeited estates, and was refused; in fact he has been a marked man ever since he espoused the cause of Prince Caraccioli, on Count Thurn's ship, on board which that unfortunate prince was hung."

"Thank God," said Hugh De Courcy, with a flush on his cheek, "I was absent then with the Russian fleet, bombarding Ancona, or my service in the Neapolitan navy had expired."

"Hush, hush, Hugh," interrupted Sir John, looking considerably disturbed, "don't talk of that—it's past. The Prince was a doomed man. No human power could have saved him."

"Except Lady Hamilton," answered De Courcy, bitterly, "and she would not be seen till the poor old man was strung up like up a felon; and then she walked the quarter-deck to behold his agony."

"Hugh De Courcy," said Sir John Acton, sternly, "why this to me? You know, I give you my sacred word that I exerted myself to the utmost; but when two women, with unlimited

power over those who could have controlled his fate, were resolved he should die—and die like a dog—he died. But no more of this—I cannot bear it; and take care, Hugh, how you express your sentiments upon this subject to others: it is too recent to be forgotten.

“ Now to resume our previous discourse with respect to Baracco. I am quite satisfied of his being a traitor. You cannot doubt my system; for one of the very principal members of the secret society of the Caraccioli is my paid agent; he was present last night at a meeting held in an old uninhabited mansion, formerly belonging to Caraccioli, in the Stradi di Ova. There were twenty-one members present, and Baracco was one; and that turbulent democrat and furious revolutionist, the Lazzaroni Campobello, another; this rascal can raise near three thousand men, in a moment. There are five hundred and one influential members; and the ramifications are extensive; those insurgents who escaped from the forts are still in the city, though hundreds have

been executed. Now the worst of it is, that there are hundreds of sailors in our ships who adored Caraccioli, and who were furious at his death. Baracco and his agents are keeping up this feeling. I fear there are many such spirits in your frigate. Now the first thing you must do, when you get on board, is to arrest Baracco."

"You give me a terrible task," said De Courcy, with considerable emotion; "I esteemed Baracco, and he seemed sincere in his friendship to me."

Sir John Acton looked our hero, for some moments, in the face, with a very thoughtful expression.

"I see," said he, after a pause, "that I must be candid. For the sake of your future fortune and advancement I thought to remain silent; but, after all, perhaps, the straight path is the best. He that deals with an Italian must use deception; but I now deal with my own countryman—" and, opening a desk, Sir John took forth three pieces of a torn

letter, and, joining them together, laid them on the table; and then, looking up into the features of the surprised De Courcy, he said, "Read—"

There were but six lines, and some words were lost. The writing was in Italian. De Courcy read them, staggered back, his face flushed with passion, and, striking his forehead with force, he exclaimed,—

"My God, what a madman I have been!"

"Adieu," muttered Sir John, in a very low voice, "to all the hopes of a match with the Princess of Sorento."

The words De Courcy read were as follows :

—————"Juliette has promised to have the Signora Wharton in the Pavilion to-night. Chance may assist us; at all events ——— him ashore, and depend on me, for ——— and his troubling you or me—— say 10 o'clock.

"SPINOLA."

"Well," remarked Sir John, "you can

scarcely have any scruples in arresting this precious friend of yours now?"

De Courcy's heart heaved with intense emotion. He was still pale; but, in a low, calm voice, he asked, "This letter, then was written to Guiseppe Baracco?"

"It was," said Sir John.

"May I ask how it possibly came into your hands?"

"Certainly; the events of last night have determined me no longer to procrastinate. Your life is never safe, whilst this friend of yours is at liberty."

"What," said De Courcy, "was last night's attempt on my life owing to Baracco?"

"Unquestionably owing to him," answered Sir John. "It was observed at the meeting of the Caraccioli, last night, that you were in the way; that if Baracco had the command of the Frigate, which he would, if you were removed, the King and Royal Family would be in the power of the conspirators.

"That pleasant gentleman, Campobello,

the Lazzaroni, laughed, and good naturedly engaged to remove you, before twelve hours were over—this was agreed to unanimously, so that you need not feel flattered by the feeling that exists among the Carraciolis for yourself.

“As soon as my agent got free, he sought an interview with me, I was at the Villa Reale—so did not see him till my return; I was startled, for the plot was well conceived; but I was doubly anxious about your life, as I felt quite satisfied that that rascal Campobello, would follow up his intention. I despatched a messenger to you at the palace; you had left, and my messenger hurried towards your hotel, and arrived on the spot when your life was attempted, just at the time you were assisting some Lazzaroni girl who was hurt; he soon learned the circumstances from the bystanders, and knowing that you were safe for the night, he hurried back to tell me.”

“I am sure, Sir John,” exclaimed De Courcy, with much emotion, “You have been

a father to me, and I can never show or express to you sufficiently my gratitude."

"And yet," replied the minister, with a smile, "by jove, you will not marry the Princess of Sorento, all I can say to you—."

"Not now," said De Courcy, with a very serious and disturbed countenance, "but I pray you, tell me how you obtained that torn letter?—and then I will go on board and arrest this most treacherous and false villian, Baracco'."

"You must do it carefully and quietly," remarked Sir John, "no intelligence of his arrest must reach the city; let no one in the frigate communicate with boats or the shore. You have all your officers and crew of the "Vesuvius" on board, but you have also, nearly two hundred, and perhaps more, strangers to you in the frigate. You will have the Royal guard with you, and the marines."

"I have not the slightest fear of the seamen," said De Courcy. The "Vesuvius" now commanded by Captain Gramani, with two gun

boats and three-armed zibeas is now in harbour, and will, of course, accompany his Majesty to Palermo.

"The "Thetis" frigate, and the two brigs with her, will in a few days be here, and also, Septimo."

"Yes, I am aware they are all expected," observed Sir John, and then he added, more seriously: "I fear the power of revolutionary France will crush us in the end; but let me tell you how I obtained that letter, and then you may depart. Lady Acton accompanies the Queen, as well as the Princess of Sorento, and all the ladies of the court, so you will have enough to do; but as I said, now for the finder of this letter, which I deliver to you, you may want it, for—your vindication with a certain fair one."

Hugh De Courcy eagerly took the letter, and put it carefully in his pocket book.

"You have a young midshipman now on board the frigate, formerly of the "Vesuvius," to whom you are very partial."

"Ha," cried De Courcy, "Young Stefano Pamfilê—a brave and kind-hearted youth. It was through him, then, Sir John?"

"Yes," returned the minister, "it was—his father was a great friend of mine, and served me here on my first arrival. The boy will tell you all himself, it's no use wasting time now. So hasten to your ship, all the arrangements for their Majesties' passage to the mole, and proceeding on board, will be arranged; but recollect my orders concerning Baracco, arrest him quietly, no bustle or noise—arrest him on your own responsibility. On arriving at Palermo, hand him over to the authorities there. I will arrange for that; but the King is to know nothing of the affair; should he remark Baracco's absence, say he is ill, and now farewell. You will sail for Malta, and England, as soon as you have landed their Majesties, and the special envoy joins you. You will have all your despatches this evening, and—the packet we spoke of. I shall see you again on board."

CHAPTER III.

IN a very thoughtful mood Captain De Courcy returned to his hotel, and ordered his personal attendant, a young Englishman, who had served him faithfully for three or four years previously, but, who did not accompany him to the siege of Genoa, to pack up and get on board as soon as possible. Having given these directions, he proceeded towards the mole.

Amidst the reflections that crowded the brain of De Courcy, was one predominant and

absorbing. The thought that the beautiful Mary was perfectly guiltless of the weakness, he had so rashly and cruelly accused her of. Bitterly he now bewailed his credulity, and the passionate haste with which he had judged her, and the rash impetuosity he had displayed in quitting Genoa.

Would his still fondly-adored Mary forgive him, was the next thought. Would they ever meet again. After such cruel desertion, perhaps she considered their intercourse for ever at an end ; how face her, how approach her, after such unjustifiable treatment ; again, (he coloured to the temples,) when he recollected how weakly and thoughtlessly he had acted ever since his return to Naples ; to drown thought, to drive away the image of one who daily and nightly haunted his thoughts and dreams, he had, in a manner, yielded to the fascinations of the Princess Clarina, and though he had spoken no word of love to her, or the slightest approach to love ; he had appeared more than pleased and flattered by her attention ;

he knew he was jealously and eagerly watched by many a Neapolitan noble and cavalero when near the Princess, and perhaps the beautiful Clarina herself might be deceived by his conduct; he did not deny to himself, but that in time, he would have probably returned her affection, provided he had remained convinced of Mary Wharton's desertion of him; but now, the case was reversed, Mary was pure as an angel in his mind, and he, the reverse. Gentle, and we hope, fair reader, excuse us that we cannot, consistent with truth, make our hero, a perfect character. Was there ever a man perfect, alas! or woman either? though the latter approach much nearer to perfection, than ever man can boast of doing.

Hugh was only four and twenty, and though brave, generous, and noble-minded, was a slave to impulse, and, at times, to passion; the consequence was, that many of his good qualities were occasionally marred by those two failings.

As he proceeded to the mole, the disagreeable

duty he had to perform, gave him some uneasiness ; after years of intercourse with one whom he was accustomed to esteem as a friend, it was painful to a degree to have this delusion dissipated ; but ten times more so, to find that not only was his friendship a farce, but that in fact, he had been bestowing his affection on an assassin and a traitor.

As he turned round a corner of the government stores, previous to reaching the mole, a young female darted out from an arch, and for an instant stood before him, it was the Lazzaroni girl who had saved his life the night before.

“Ah, ragazza,” exclaimed De Courcy, in a kind tone, and taking out his purse, which he intended for her, but the girl impatiently put back his hands and shook her head, with an anxious disturbed look, saying, “I do not want money, Signor. Listen,” she gazed down the long blank wall, and along the store houses, there was no one near at the moment, and then she hurriedly said,

“There are fifty men on board your ship who have sworn to take your life; they were all entered on Wednesday and Thursday last. Santa Maria, I am watched,” and, turning round, she darted in under the low arch and disappeared.

De Courcy, rather startled, looked round, but saw no one; the place looked deserted, for the stores belonged to the government, were out of use at that time, and opposite them was a long blank wall. He had taken that way purposely, as a nearer road, the sentinel on duty letting him pass, being in uniform. The girl at first surprised him; but the intelligence she imparted was startling; it was not that he feared for his life—he was accustomed to brave death; and was naturally and morally incapable of fear; but it proved to him the dangerous inroad the revolutionary spirit had made amongst the Neapolitans, and also, that the intentions of the society of Caraccioli were really deadly. He at once surmised that the Lazzaroni girl had contrived to gain this in-

telligence by overhearing some secret conference of her father with some of his comrades, and out of gratitude had warned him.

Hugh De Courcy was quite aware that the complement of men wanted for the new frigate had been made up from merchant vessels and fishing crafts, a large bounty being offered ; for though the Neapolitan frigates were remarkably beautiful crafts, as to build, rigging, and equipment, their crews, except in two or three instances, were notoriously defective, and scarcely ever under thorough control.

Baracco had entered one hundred men into the ship's books during the week. Now if the Lazzaroni girl spoke the truth, and De Courcy placed uncommon faith in her warning ; the fifty intended assassins were amongst those hundred.

This was certainly a critical state of things ; the King and his court would be on board before sunset ; the preparations along the mole were proceeding rapidly. So hurrying along, De Courcy entered his six-oared gig, which

was waiting for him at the extremity of the mole, steered by the young Midshipman Stefano Pamfilé.

The frigate was at anchor, about half a mile out from the mole head; it was a beautiful day, the heat tempered by a brisk west wind, that just rippled the surface of the bay, and filled the sails of the numerous crafts that covered its waters.

No boats can be more picturesque than the fishing boats of the bay and islands of Naples, their bright colours, lofty peaked prows, their taunt latine sails, and the gaudy, though scant attire of the fishermen themselves, make the picture a pleasing and varied one; and when we add to it, the noble vessels of war that then graced the bay, all dressed and decorated in honor of their Majesties' embarkation, we greatly enhance the beauties and grandeur of the scene. Captain De Courcy made no remark concerning the torn letter given him by Sir John, to young Stifano Pamfilé, he reserved that for another time; he had a trying

and intensely disagreeable duty to perform, and it engrossed all his thoughts.

He looked up with pride—the pride of a sailor—at the noble frigate he was commander of; her beautiful proportions, her lofty spars, her square yards, her sails so symmetrically furled. She was covered from truck to deck with flags and streamers; splendid awnings shaded her carpeted quarter deck, and bouquets of the choicest flowers were hung in fanciful festoons in every place.

Just previous to approaching the side of the frigate, Captain De Courcy perceived Lieutenant Baracco pacing the quarter deck, with a telescope under his arm.

The young commander pressed his lips hard, for it pained him to see the man he had once esteemed about to be arrested as a traitor, and most likely to receive the doom of one, and that shortly.

If the crime of conspiring against his life had been the only one Baracco had been guilty of, De Courcy would have cared little

about the meeting that was now to take place ; but he had wounded him in a far more sensitive part, he had, by falsehood and base treachery, perhaps, deprived him of what was dearer to him infinitely than life.

There was little time, however, for reflection, for the gig dashed up to the vessel, the sides were manned as usual, the officers standing ready to receive their commander. Captain De Courcy, before he ascended the ladder, said, in a low voice, to the young midshipman,

“ When you see me descend to the cabin with Lieutenant Baracco, desire Lieutenant Burtoni, with two of his marines, to remain within call, let them station themselves by the cabin door.”

The midshipman looked a little startled, but touching his cap, bowed saying, “ Very well, sir.”

De Courcy reached the quarter deck, and as Lieutenant Baracco, in his usual manner, came forward to receive his commander, said, with considerable calmness, and almost, as he

thought, in his usual manner, " Pray follow me to the cabin, Mr. Baracco."

Do as he would, it was scarcely in human power so completely to master his feelings that no symptoms of what was passing in De Courcy's mind, should be perceptible to the person he addressed.

The Lieutenant paused, his cheeks grew deadly pale, as his eyes met those of De Courcy, but the latter descended to the cabin without another word or look ; and he stood for a moment rooted to the deck. No one had heard the words addressed by the Captain to him ; instantly, collecting his scattered thoughts, he rapidly crossed the deck, and looking over the side, perceived the six-oared gig waiting.

Turning to the third Lieutenant, who was standing near the gangway, he said, " I must be quick, by St. Nicholas, we have little time to lose," then rapidly descending the side, and jumping into the boat, he exclaimed, " Pull away my lads, I must reach the mole in less than ten minutes."

"Aye, aye, Sir," returned the men, again seizing their oars, and the light boat shot from the side like a meteor.

No one looked surprised at this sudden movement of the first lieutenant, for they thought he was acting in obedience to the orders of their commander. The boat had measured half the distance to the mole, as young Stefano Pamfilé came up from the main deck, with Lieutenant Burtoni and two marines, and walked on towards the quarter deck—at the same moment, Captain De Courcy, wondering what kept Lieutenant Baracco, re-ascended upon deck.

"Where is Lieutenant Baracco?" he demanded, addressing his second lieutenant.

"Just pulled a shore, sir," returned the officer, looking rather puzzled, "in your gig; did not —"

Hugh De Courcy looked for an instant confounded; with a hasty stride he gained the frigate's side, looked over the bulwarks, and at a glance saw pursuit was hopeless. Young

Pamfilé stood pale and puzzled ; whilst the officer of marines and his two men remained gazing round them with surprise and curiosity discernable in their countenances.

Captain De Courcy was chagrined ; he had not then disguised his countenance, and Barraco must have feared discovery ; but there was no time to lose, or much mischief might ensue.

“ You may retire and dismiss your men, Lieutenant Burtoni,” said De Courcy, to the marine officer, and then, with a motion of his hand, he requested the attendance of the confounded and bewildered young midshipman.

Leaving all the officers of the frigate, considerably mystified, Captain De Courcy again entered the cabin, took pen and paper, and hastily wrote a few lines, which he folded and directed to Sir John Acton—he then looked up, and seeing young Pamfilé standing before him, appearing very miserable—said, kindly,—

“ You have committed no error, my dear Stefano, it was impossible to foresee this

contre temps. We must remedy it, as well, and as soon, as we can ; hasten on shore with this [note. See Sir John Acton if possible, and bring me back an answer ; lose not a moment."

In two minutes the young midshipman was rowing swiftly towards the mole, in a four-oared gig.

It was necessary to make some kind of explanation to his officers, as there was a great deal to be done, therefore summoning the second lieutenant, an officer of tried courage and considerable experience, De Courcy said,

" You must act as first lieutenant, Signor Vasari, for the present, and I shall exert myself, and use my interest in getting this temporary command confirmed."

The lieutenant's face flushed with surprise and a feeling of gratification. Still he did not like to venture a question, and waited for his commander to solve the mystery—but Captain De Courcy did not intend to give any further explanation till he

heard from the Prime Minister, merely concluding,

"I wish you to get the ship's books, and note down for me the names of all the men, who were entered on last Wednesday and Thursday, and let me know the number. You must be quick."

"I will return with the list in less than ten minutes."

"Ha," said De Courcy taking the list when brought, and running his eye over it, "sixty-four men and two boys on those two days. What kind of men are they?" he demanded. "Merchant sailors, fishermen, or what?"

"There's a mixture of all sorts, sir," said the lieutenant, "but the most part of them have served in the king's ships. Several of them were formerly in the *"Minerva,"* and a dozen or more served under the unfortunate Prince Caraccioli. I fancy there are a few insurgents amongst them; but you know, sir," added the lieutenant, "they were pardoned on the surrender of Castel Nova."

“ Well, I tell you what you must do, Signor Vasari, divide those men, so as to put not more than ten together in any one mess, and place those particularly, and mind, secretly, under the surveillance of a quarter-master, and let them be carefully watched ; when we get to Palermo I will be more explicit,” he then went up on deck, looking very thoughtful.

In less than half-an-hour both boats came back. The midshipman brought a note from Sir John, De Courcy opened it. It contained but the following few lines :

“ Dear Hugh,

“ Your friend had his wits about him ; perhaps it's as well as it is ; I will remedy the mischance ; however, make your second lieutenant first, and so on ; and let young Pamfilé be acting third lieutenant ; he has served his time, and is a good lad. Say nothing about Baracco, let your officers and crew think what they please. You will of course be expected to steer the royal barge—six o'clock is the time fixed. Yours affectionately,

“ J. ACTON.”

It may be supposed that the advance of rank in the different officers created the most intense surprise, but also, equal gratification ; as to young Pamfilé, he was in ecstasies.

Amongst the crew the most profound wonder was evinced at the strange, mysterious desertion of the first lieutenant ; and there were many amongst them who looked exceedingly blank, and no little startled, especially when they found the way they were separated into messes.

We are not going to detain our readers with a minute description of the embarkation of their Neapolitan Majesties ; they having no doubt witnessed, and, if not witnessed, at all events read of the embarkation of our own gracious Queen. There was the usual amount of powder expended on shore and afloat ; flags and banners waved ; the mole was carpeted ; bands of music ; arches of evergreens and choice flowers. Countless boats filled with a delighted crowd ; land and sea alive with eager

gazers. Shouts of "Viva il Re Ferdinande, Viva il Regina," and thousands of other equally loyal vociferations.

Who would have thought, to have witnessed their Majesties' embarkation, that their beloved Napoli contained a few thousand subjects who would willingly have sacrificed the whole party. Yet, generally speaking, Ferdinand was well liked ; but the fierce and dangerous doctrines of the French Revolution had sown its seeds, and they had taken root ; it required years to exterminate them ; and like weeds, they are struggling for existence still.

A tremendous roar of artillery burst from the Castle of San Elmo, then from Castel dell Ovo ; then from the Minerva. Then a burst of flame rushed from the frigate's side—then the "Vesuvius" roared in reply—then the gunboats, then the zebees, and then, as if in mockery, the private endeavours of patriotic individuals to waste powder, followed, and amidst the whole rose shouts, roars of artillery, screams

from the Lazzaroni, waving of kerchiefs and scarfs, and tossing of hats.

The Frigate, with her royal freight was under weigh, covered with a cloud of snow-white canvas, now for the first time spread towards the breeze. She glided majestically out into the bay, followed by the other war vessel in harbour.

On board the frigate were the King and Queen, Lady Acton, the Duke and Duchesse de Almario, Prince Montefalcone, the Princess of Sorento, and a few ladies, their attendants.

The remainder of their Majesties' suite followed in the "Vesuvius."

Sir John had taken an affectionate leave of his protégé, told him he need not be uneasy respecting the singular escape of Lieutenant Baracco, for that he was sure to be arrested by his agents, before twenty-four hours were over, gave him the promised packet, which contained full particulars of his birth &c.,—and bade him farewell.

“ You will have a difficult card to play”, said Sir John, at parting, “ for I assure you the Princess fully expects that you will lay yourself and fortune at her feet; and I know that the King is prepared to create you a Count, on your marriage with the Princess. You would take your title from one of the Princess’s fiefs in Sicily.”

De Courcy made no reply, though he felt exceedingly distressed, but in his present situation with his royal master requiring every instant his attendance, there was no time for thought.

The Queen was exceedingly gracious, complimented our hero highly upon his arrangements, the beauty of the ship and the admirable order and exquisite neatness maintained throughout the whole vessel, every part of which both King and Queen visited and inspected.

Numerous were the questions our hero had to answer, not only from their Majesties, but

from Lady Acton, and the Princess Clarina, who attended the Queen over the ship.

King Ferdinand, as usual, was extremely affable to the various officers, and even the crew; to many of whom he spoke. His Majesty, not knowing Lieutenant Baracco personally, might probably have mistaken the first Lieutenant for that officer, for during his passage over the ship he did not once mention the absent officer's name.

"With this wind, Captain De Courcy," observed his Majesty, returning to the quarter-deck, just as the sun dipped beneath the wave, presenting to view one of those glorious sunsets seen only in southern climes; "how many hours will our passage to Palermo occupy?"

"Scarcely more, your Majesty, than twenty-four hours; by to-morrow's sunset, I trust your Majesty will have landed."

They were then passing the Islands of Procida and Ischia.

The awnings were removed, and the full splendour of this unrivalled scene was viewed by the Royal party with unmingled delight—till the short twilight of the south involved the enchanting landscape in misty obscurity.

CHAPTER IV.

Captain De Courcy paced the quarter-deck of the "Serena," immersed in thought ; it was ten o'clock, their Majesties were below with their attendants at supper ; the water was singularly smooth, for the wind was at north, and the frigate was steering south and by west.

A most careful watch was preserved throughout the entire ship. It was a glorious night, though the moon had not yet risen, and the deep blue firmament above was studded with its myriads of worlds.

The sea appeared like a sheet of fire, encircling the ship, from the uncommon phosphoric state of the element. As our hero looked astern he could just get a sight of the white sails of the "Vesuvius," but she was far astern, the "Serena" sailed superbly.

He was standing gazing back at his late favourite, and his thoughts fixed upon the time when he had stood beside fair Miss Wharton on the quarter deck, thinking no greater felicity could fall to the lot of mortal man than Mary's love, and he felt sure that love was his. Where was Mary then, was his next thought. Was he remembered or forgotten?

"On what, or on whom, are Captain De Courcy's thoughts fixed now?" said a soft pleasing voice, beside him, and a gentle tap of a fan caused him to start like a guilty thing, as he turned round and recognized Clarina Obruzza, and another lady on whose arm she was leaning.

"A sailor's thoughts, fair lady," replied the

young Captain, "are mostly centred upon his floating home."

"He thinks, sometimes, it is to be hoped," observed the Princess, gaily, "upon his lady-love; was there ever a sailor without a guiding star to cheer him on his lonely course,—but what a lovely night, the heat below was so oppressive, that with my fair friend here, I have intruded on your solitude."

"Say not intruded, Princess," replied De Courcy, "for seldom or ever is a sailor's life so charmingly broken in upon as now—"

"Still I should think," replied the Princess, gazing up with wonder at the towering masts, and their broad spread of snow-white canvas, "there must be, at times, a charm in a sailor's life; the consciousness of his power in controlling such a beautiful vessel; of mastering storms and tempests; and then the change into a scene like this, so calm, so lovely—there is such room for thought; his must be a barren mind indeed that can behold a night like this, upon the wide ocean, with heaven's bright

vault above, and this rippling sea beneath, that cannot find food for thought and deep reflection; and wonder and awe of Him who created both."

Clarina Obruza spoke as she thought, and her voice was soft and persuasive.

"You say truly, Princess," returned our hero, "no-where, probably, is there a greater field for thought than on the boundless sea."

"For my part," observed the Princess's companion, with a very strong inclination to yawn, "I think the sea is just about the very last place in the world for thought, except indeed, one train of thought, and that is, the calculation of how soon we may get to the dear land again. It may do very well for lovers, provided they are not sea sick, which I assure you, Clarina, I am very much inclined to be; and the only thought that occupies my mind is, the very unromantic one of getting to my couch, and praying to the Madonna, to shorten our voyage."

"Ah, Duchesse," returned Clarina, laughing,

"I forget; you are no lover of the sea, so I will not tax your good nature any longer."

"Indeed, my dear," said the Duchesse De Almanio, a young and very charming woman, and whose husband was nearly four-score, "I do not think I shall improve the sensations I experience, in the least, by going below; the air is reviving, but as you and Captain De Courcy appeared to be getting into a remarkably poetical and romantic mood, and as I am a plain matter-of-fact kind of personage, I wished to bring you back to the world we live in, and that, at present, is confined to this little ship. Now suppose we were to fall in with a French ship, with the horrid tricolor flying from its mast I suppose, what would you do, Captain De Courcy, with his sacred Majesty on board, to say nothing of our precious selves?"

"Run away, Duchesse," replied our hero, laughing.

"Ah, it's very well to say run away," remarked the Duchesse, "but ships cannot always run away."

"In that case, your grace, we must get his

Majesty's permission to fight ; but I can assure you, we shall not be reduced to either alternative, for there are no French ships nearer than Civita Vecchia, and I think, without boasting, that the "Serena" would have nothing to fear from them, either in running or fighting."

"By the bye," said the Princess, "I have not seen your friend and shipmate, Baracco ; has he remained on shore, or been advanced ? for I think I heard you say he was appointed first lieutenant of the "Serena." I do not forget your gallant friend's services when in the "Vesuvius."

"You gave him and all the crew substantial proof of that, Princess," said our hero, "but Lieutenant Baracco has other objects in view ; he remained on shore, and will not, I believe, again serve in his Majesty's navy."

"I am sure you must regret the loss of an old comrade," answered Clarina, pacing the deck with our hero ; the Duchesse de Almanio sitting down beside two or three ladies, who came up from below, the heat being oppressive

—the moon had then risen, and a strange lurid glare was diffused over the whole atmosphere; the breeze suddenly dying away.

As the Princess spoke, the loud flap of the sails against the masts attracted her attention. “Dear me, Captain De Courcy,” she exclaimed, pausing in her walk, “how suddenly the wind has ceased, and what a strange light the moon gives. Is this a common effect at sea?”

“There is a great deal of electricity in the air,” observed De Courcy, “and the heat has been great, until yesterday’s breeze lessened it. I should not wonder, but that as the moon goes down, we shall have a change, probably thunder, which will cool the air.”

“I hope not,” cried the Princess, “for though I am not afraid of thunder-storms, they affect my nerves and head.”

“Then I sincerely trust,” said our hero, “that we may escape such a visitation.”

One of the officers coming up, requesting a word with his commander, interrupted the con-

versation, and shortly afterwards the Princess and all the party retired below.

There was now not a breath of air, and the heat became intensely oppressive. Captain De Courcy would not leave the deck during the night; and as the moon declined, vast masses of clouds rose up in the south-west quarter, and in a magical manner the whole heavens became like a huge pall; and still not a breath of wind disturbed the surface of the water—whilst the heat continued increasing.

“Get our light canvass furled,” cried our hero, to Lieutenant Vasari, “we shall have a heavy thunder-storm before day-light.”

“I have no doubt but that it will be violent,” replied the lieutenant, “this heat, and the previous state of the atmosphere, puts me in mind of the tremendous storm and eruption of Mount Etna, four years back; which, though it lasted but four hours, strewed the coast of Naples with wrecks.”

“It’s tremendously dark,” observed our hero, “and, by the low moaning sound aloft,

it will not be long before the storm breaks. Send the hands up and furl all, and let the top-gallant masts be struck ; with our present freight we cannot be too cautious."

Captain De Courcy had scarcely uttered the words, before a burst of flame issued from the heavens over them, so blinding from its intense vividness, that the eyes of all involuntarily closed ; the crash that followed seemed to shake the ship to its very centre, a tremendous motion was felt over the whole vessel, several of the king's attendants hurried up, to know, by desire of their Majesties, if the ship had struck.

But the gallant frigate was untouched ; her crew were roused, and every inch of canvass was securely furled ; for those acquainted with the Mediterranean, are well aware of the terrific force of the first storm-gusts and the uncertainty of their direction.

Flash after flash, followed by peals of thunder, so prolonged and so deafening, that many of the officers and crew stood bewildered ;

and still the ocean slept ; its surface appearing during the vivid glow of the lightning, like a mighty mirror of polished steel ; and then was heard a roar aloft, even more fearful than that of the heaven's artillery ; the clouds to the south-west were rent asunder, like magic, and the storm king rode forth on his fiery steed.

Each officer was at his post, and crew at theirs, to be ready to set the storm stay-sails the moment the gale should settle in one fixed point. There was not one drop of rain : at length, with a roar of might, the tempest struck the sea, within a hundred yards of the frigate, driving before it one sheet of foam, a second and it reached the ship, striking her on her starboard quarter.

Such was the extraordinary force of the blast, that the "Serena" heeled over till her guns touched the foaming deep. She had no power to move forward, for the blast wheeled by, and then another gust, even more violent than the first, struck her on her larboard bows ; the lightning and the thunder continuing

in unabated fury. The frigate reeled under the repeated shocks, whilst amid the awful din no word could be heard.

The terrified attendants of the king came rushing upon deck, and even several of the females, frightened out of all consciousness.

The commander was standing, with his speaking-trumpet in hand, grasping the rope stretched across the deck to steady himself, when he felt his arm seized with a convulsive energy—he could not hear the words that were spoken, but a blaze of light from the still dense sky revealed the pale features of the Princess of Sorrento, wrapped in her mantle, the hood torn back by the storm, and her hair streaming out, in a dishevelled state.

The “Serena” was just then struck by a gust, even more furious than the preceding, and from a different quarter; and the sea resembled a boiling cauldron, so tossed and worried was it by the various squalls; but after this gust, the whole heavens to the south-

west quarter, were torn widely asunder, and then the true gale burst upon them in its might and power.

Now Captain De Courcy knew what to do ; gently placing the Princess upon one of the settees, lashed in their places, and begging her to have no fear, for all peril was over ; and the gallant frigate, dashing before the tempest like a noble racer satisfied of its triumph, De Courcy gave his orders, and these orders being carefully attended to, the frigate was brought to the wind, under her storm-stay-sails.

It was broad daylight when a cry arose, " the " Vesuvius," dismasted," and all saw the brig was driving right before the gale, without a single stick standing. In three minutes she would, from the shift of the wind, run right upon them, but the frigate was instantly payed off before the wind, and the " Vesuvius," thus ran parallel to them. Fearing she would be lost on the coast not far off, and feeling a

great affection for his old ship; De Courcy resolved to try and take her in tow. By his judicious care and skill, and being fully prepared, his vessel had suffered nothing, not even a rope had started, the storm was driving away to the north, and a bright clear sky remained to windward, with the cheering beams of the rising sun playing on the storm-tossed water.

Edging down along-side the "Vesuvius," but keeping at a safe distance, Captain De Courcy, with his speaking-trumpet, hailed the brig, and told her Captain he would take her in tow, telling him to stand by and make fast the cables, and he would contrive to get on board.

Having complete controul over the movements of the frigate, and being ably seconded by his officers and crew, two cables were finally got on board the "Vesuvius," and then the frigate was again gradually brought to the wind. By skilful management the "Vesuvius" rode easily by the hausers, made fast round the stump of her foremast.

Every five minutes the King sent a message to Captain De Courcy to know how they got on, which our hero answered to his Majesty's satisfaction; he also prevailed on the ladies and the Duke and Duchesse de Almanio to retire below, for the sea was getting rapidly up, and was flying over the ship like a mist; but in two hours the fury of the gale visibly lessened, and at the same time kept veering to the north-west, till, finally, the frigate could lie on her course under treble-reefed topsails, and even with the brig in tow, made good way. But no sign or symptom of the gun-boats or the armed zebecs could be seen.

Gradually the sea fell; the sky remained without a speck; the bright sun shone forth with its glorious beams, now tempered by the refreshing north-west wind, which tempted their Majesties to come on deck and breathe the fresh air, after the heat and alarms of the past night. To look at the well-arranged deck of the frigate—her spars all standing—not a rope displaced—all neat and trim, one would have

supposed she had just sailed out of dock, instead of having weathered as severe a storm as ever blew, for the time it lasted.

King Ferdinand was a tolerably good sailor, being accustomed, of late years, to many trips across from Naples to Sicily.

The "Vesuvius," dismasted, and in tow of the frigate, first caught his Majesty's attention.

"Ah, Captain De Courcy," exclaimed his Majesty, "my courtiers, and the fair dames, their spouses, must have suffered severely last night. Your old ship wanted its old commander. We must compliment you, indeed, on the skill you have displayed in keeping the ship in such exceeding good trim after such a terrible tempest; we never heard so awful a storm."

"Your Majesty, I was ably seconded by my officers and crew; and if the "Vesuvius" has suffered, your Majesty will please to recollect she had not so great a responsibility to answer for, to force her commander into minute precautions. The "Vesuvius," no doubt, was

caught under sail, endeavouring to keep up with the frigate, and thus lost her masts. The first burst of the storm was tremendous."

"In sooth, so it was; but cannot you manage to get the ladies from the brig, the water is getting very smooth?" demanded Ferdinand the Fourth.

"With your Majesty's permission," said our hero, "we will lower the boats and render them, and those on board the "Vesuvius," all the assistance in our power."

Four hours afterwards the "Serene" entered the port of Palermo; but their Majesties remained on board till the following morning.

They were then landed in their state barge, under a royal salute from every available battery on shore or afloat.

CHAPTER V.

WHILST the events recorded in our last chapter were taking place, Sir Charles Wharton and family reached England, without accident or adventure. The corvette in which they had embarked having, happily for the comfort of those on board, escaped encountering an enemy's ship on the passage home.

Our heroine did not quit the land of the south without feeling a great depression of spirits. The future, as far as the feelings of

her heart were concerned, looked clouded ; but wishing to relieve her kind uncle's uneasiness about her somewhat delicate appearance, she exerted herself to the utmost to appear cheerful. The society of T  rese Garetti was a source of exceeding comfort to her ; for, acquainted with the cause of her depression, she relieved her mind much by conversing with her amiable and attached friend on the subject so dear to her heart. Sir Charles Wharton possessed a very handsome mansion in — square, and there Mary and her friend found every luxury and comfort that wealth and affection could procure.

T  rese was in high spirits ; every thing was new and strange to her ; her first sensations, on setting foot on English ground, were mixed and contradictory ; the weather happened to be cloudy and misty ; and Plymouth, under those circumstances, is deprived of its real attractions ; the beauty of its scenery was hid by mists ; Mount Edgecombe was lost to the sight ; but the next day was a glorious fine

one ; the south-west wind, and its haze and mist, had given way to its near neighbour, the north-west, and a bright clear sky ; not quite so blue, T rese observed, as the Italian firmament, but still quite blue enough for contrast with the bright green fields and verdant pastures through which the Baronet's carriage rolled, with its four post-horses, on its way to London. The numerous superb mansions they passed, as they travelled through Devonshire ; the rich orchards, then loaded with their tempting fruits ; the pretty villages, with their neat cottages hid in clusters of flowering shrubs ; the roads like bowling-greens, for smoothness ; and the substantial comforts and cleanliness of the excellent hotels on the road, and the celerity with which they travelled, was all new and striking to the sight and thoughts of the fair Genoese.

London astounded her with its immensity ; and let foreigners write and say what they please respecting our nebulous climate, and

their never seeing the sun in London, its all fudge.

London is one of the healthiest cities in Europe, and enjoys as fair a proportion of sunshine as any other in the same latitude and longitude, and that is as much as we have a right to expect.

Sir Charles Wharton, with his wealth and position in society, and aristocratic birth and connections, moved in a circle of acquaintance amongst whom were many of the first nobility in the metropolis.

During his sojourn abroad he had also met, and become intimate with, several of our English nobility. Amongst those, he had become, at Nice, intimately acquainted with Lord Umfreville and his son, then a very young man. Lord Umfreville was at this time in London; it was the close of the London season; and shortly after Sir Charles's arrival in the Metropolis, his Lordship and his eldest son became frequent and friendly visitors at — square. Sir Charles, naturally, wished his

niece to mix, in a moderate degree, with the world; he did not seek to force, or at all coerce her into a matrimonial alliance, contrary to the wishes and feelings of her heart; but he wished to wean her from an attachment he considered as perfectly hopeless; he would not have objected, certainly, to her union with Captain De Courcy, when convinced that her happiness was absolutely dependant on it. But he, knowing nothing of Captain De Courcy's private life, and believing him to be without family connection of any kind, and, as he supposed, perfectly un-English—if we may use such an expression—from long residence, intercourse, and connection with foreigners. He felt rather relieved at the termination of his niece's, or as he firmly believed, his daughter's intercourse with a person the world would style a fortunate adventurer.

Like all men, at a certain period of life, he looked upon a young girl's love as likely to be as evanescent, as any of the other violent passions human nature is subject to, and to be

easily eradicated by time and change of scene, and intercourse with the world. But good-natured, kind-hearted Sir Charles, knew nothing of a young girl's heart. Anxious to let his niece see the world, as he termed London and its inhabitants, and the world to see his niece, a succession of parties and balls took place some short time after their arrival in London. Now Mary would not for worlds be so selfish, because she herself preferred seclusion, that her young friend Térése, who accompanied her to England, and was of a lively, joyous disposition, should be debarred from society, and seeing the gay sights, and enjoying the amusements the fashionable world of London afforded.

She, therefore, to a certain extent, mingled in society; went to the opera, and other places of amusement, under a distinguished chaperon.

Lady Hasarel, a widow of birth and fortune, and connected with Sir Charles Wharton by relationship, and of a kind and agreeable disposition, delightedly took charge of the

beautiful Mary and her fair friend. Miss Wharton attracted universal admiration ; her figure was graceful to a degree, and her features lovely ; but her manners, and her sweet musical voice, created even more attention and admiration ; though, it was soon remarked, she never by any chance danced at any assembly, at home or abroad ; in small and select parties, she never refused to sing, and her voice naturally powerful and exquisitely modulated, and cultivated in a country by the first masters, and where singing is a necessity of life, she astonished and bewildered her hearers, by the brilliancy and richness, and justness of her tones.

The lively and handsome Genoese had also many admirers ; she accompanied Mary in many of her duets, and attracted much attention from her correct and well cultivated taste.

To be invited to Sir Charles Wharton's mansion soon became an eagerly-sought-after object ; his well known wealth might be an inducement to some of the younger sons of the

aristocracy, but his niece's exquisite beauty and fascinating, modest, and retiring manner, though perfectly easy and self-possessed, was the grand attraction.

The foremost on the list to win Mary's attention, was the Honorable Edward Umfreville, eldest son of Lord Umfreville. Young, handsome, and accomplished, with the advantage of having travelled over most part of the continent of Europe, and heir to wealth and title. Most persons would have thought that Edward Umfreville would have a fair chance of winning Mary's love—besides, his manners were extremely agreeable, lively, and sensible.

There was another candidate for the hand of the baronet's niece; formidable, the world would say, as far as rank and wealth weighed in the balance. This was young Lord Eglin, he was in the Guards, and had just succeeded to the title and estates of his father. But those who knew Mary, said at once, his lordship had no chance with his rival the Honorable Edward Umfreville. Lord Eglin, was

at this period, six or seven-and-twenty, tall, well made, and remarkably handsome; but proud to excess, haughty and overbearing, but with sufficient command over himself to disguise those disagreeable qualifications.

Lord Umfreville, was a nobleman who had passed a considerable period of his life abroad, he was a man of high and honorable character, somewhat proud in outward appearance, but not so in reality; he was fondly attached to his eldest son; his youngest was a lieutenant in the navy, and who had already distinguished himself in that service; he was then serving aboard the "Danae"—twenty-gun ship, commanded by Captain Lord Proby.

The Honorable Edward Umfreville soon became passionately attached to our heroine, who, with a sigh, soon perceived this to be the case, and she regretted it; for, of all the young men she had yet met in London society, she felt a sincere esteem for Edward Umfreville.

Sir Charles was, however, rejoiced to see this attachment; he would have preferred him

for a husband for his niece, to any other suitor, no matter what might be his rank or wealth.

One evening, at a select party at Lady Hasarel's, Edward Umfreville was seated beside Mary, conversing agreeably on many subjects ; it was a small assemblage, but the young folks were dancing in another saloon. The conversation happened to turn upon Italy.

"You must have suffered considerably during the blockade of Genoa, Miss Wharton?" observed Edward Umfreville, "for the French force within the city were reduced to terrible extremity for want of food."

"I was under the protection of a most kind friend and relative," said Mary, suppressing a sigh, "who, being wealthy, spared no pains or gold in providing us the best, at all events, that could be had, though, indeed, we lived many days, I may say weeks, without meat of any sort ; but we had many luxuries in other things, purchased up at the commencement of the siege, when things were not so scarce. You have travelled a good deal,

through Italy yourself, Mr. Umfreville?" added Mary, wishing to lead the conversation from Genoa.

"I was very young," answered her companion, in reply, "when my first visit to Italy was paid; my father was proceeding to travel over Dalmatia and Greece, and the Holy Land. He left me in a college, at Sienna, to study the continental languages.

"They speak the Italian language with a purer accent, I believe, in Sienna, than any other city in Italy?" remarked Mary.

"Yes, such is the case; my residence there, however, was at first irksome, till I found a companion, greatly to my liking; he was an English lad, remarkably handsome, and of high spirit and temper; I became greatly attached to him, his name was De Courcy." At that name the young lady trembled, as if struck with an ague; it was but momentarily, but her cheeks became deadly pale, such an effect had the name just pronounced, upon her. She was not aware that Hugh De Courcy had resided

in the college at Sienna, neither had he ever mentioned the name of Umfreville to her.

In speaking to Mary of his early life, he had merely said, that from his earliest recollection he had been under the protection of Sir John Acton, who had spared no pains in his education ; but refrained from informing her who his parents were—the sudden mention, therefore, of De Courcy's name, recalled the past so forcibly, that she could not, at first, conquer her emotion. Edward Umfreville, at that moment did not look up, but when he did, he was startled at seeing her still so pale, he therefore paused, and then said, in a deeply anxious tone, with his heart's secret in his expressive countenance, “ Good Heavens, Miss Wharton, are you ill ; is the heat too much for you ? ”

“ Oh, not at all,” replied Mary, in her calm, sweet voice, “ I am rather subject to sudden, though slight, attacks of faintness, since my return to England ; perhaps the effect of change of climate.”

This assertion was in point of fact the case, but it arose from the mind, not the climate. "Do not stir, I beg you," she continued, using her vinegrette, "it passes off as quickly as it comes on."

Térese Garette then joined them; she had observed the change in Mary's features, and her paleness; and knowing she did sometimes feel this fainting sensation, she said, "You had better, Mary dear, for a minute or so, breathe the fresh air from the open window."

"There is no occasion, Térese, the sensation has passed;" and in truth, by a great mental effort, she quite recovered her composure, and also some portion of colour; but, as she feared a renewal of the conversation, she detained her fair friend, and still chatting, took a turn through the rooms, to observe the dancers.

Edward Umfreville had not the slightest idea that his mention of the name of De Courcy had caused Mary Wharton's emotion;

but he now resolved to make a bold push to obtain the object he cherished so deeply at heart, and this was to obtain Sir Charles Wharton's consent to address his niece, and to win her consent to his proposals; he had his father's approbation; but in secret he trembled for his success. He could not perceive, it is true, that she favoured any one, even so much as himself; and though he often remarked Lord Eglin's attention, and felt satisfied that he also admired the beautiful girl that had so engrossed his entire thoughts, still she appeared only polite to his lordship, and even, he fancied, avoided him.

In fact, Lord Eglin had so decided an opinion of himself, that he flattered himself that he had only to propose to be accepted. The Honourable Edward Umfreville accordingly spoke candidly to the Baronet before he made any proposals to Mary. Sir Charles very warmly approved of his attentions; he wished him every success; but candidly said he would

leave Mary entirely to the dictates of her own heart.

Edward Umfreville was of too noble a disposition to dream of having Mary's affections coerced; if he could induce her to return his love, he should feel himself the happiest of men; but not for worlds would he accept her hand without her own free consent.

The following day to this conference between the Baronet and Edward Umfreville, a terrible accident to the former threw his whole family into grief and mourning. Crossing the lower end of St. James's-street, to the Palace, he slipped on a piece of orange-peel, and before he could recover his balance, the hind wheel of a gentleman's carriage struck him on the head, and left him senseless on the pavement. Not the slightest blame could be attached to the coachman, for so anxious was he to avoid the collision, that he turned his horses so short, that the pole of the carriage he was driving snapped in the socket.

Sir Charles Wharton was conveyed home,

and the first surgical assistance procured; he had received a concussion of the brain.

The distraction of Mary was overpowering. She lost all control over her mind, and repeatedly fainted. Still the doctors said he might be saved; they were unceasing in their attentions, and after a few days the Baronet rallied and recovered speech and consciousness, but the shock, it was still feared, would be fatal. Mary never left the side of his couch; her attention and love were beyond praise.

She herself firmly believed Sir Charles was her father. Father or not, she loved him with the devotion of a fond child.

The eighth or tenth day after the accident, which created the liveliest interest and attention from the Baronet's friends, especially in Lord Umfreville and his son, the latter appearing to suffer as much as Mary, and was almost hourly at the house, anxiously making enquiries; and on the sixth or seventh day was admitted, by the Baronet's desire, to his bedside. They remained alone for nearly half an hour,

and then the young man quitted the house, with anxious and serious look.

A day or two afterwards the Baronet himself thought it was impossible he could live but a few days longer ; his beloved Mary was by the side of his bed, with his hand clasped in her's.

" Mary, my beloved child," said Sir Charles, in a low voice, " we are about to part, and in this world for ever."

Mary felt choaking, but with a great effort she conquered her emotion ; and looking fondly and devotedly into her uncle's face, prayed that God would spare him to her yet ; " for without you, beloved father," and she pressed her lips to his hand, her whole frame trembling with emotion, " the world to me is a blank—."

" Say not so, child of my heart ; say not those words. I cannot leave the world with that peace of mind I ought. I cannot turn my thoughts to God, wholly and solely ; for you, my idolised child, occupy them almose exclusively."

"I would leave you under the care of one who is noble and good,"—Mary stood in trembling silence; and the Baronet continued, "hear me, my beloved—my last moments would be blest would you consent to receive Edward Umfreville as your future husband; he is all a fond father could wish or hope for his child."

Poor Mary, she felt her heart bursting with a terrible feeling of despair; but with a heroic effort, she conquered her feelings, and pressed her uncle's hand.

"Say, my child, that you consent to become Edward Umfreville's wife; let me die with the conviction that I have assured your felicity; for to leave you unprotected, and to the snares of the world, poisons my last moments."

"God give me strength," murmured the agitated girl, raising her beautiful eyes to heaven, and from which the tears ran in streams, and then in a low, stifled voice, she said aloud, "Be it as you wish, beloved father. To afford

you that peace you desire and deserve, I would sacrifice, oh, how willingly, my life."

"Bless you: God bless you, my own Mary. You remove the only bitter regret I feel in leaving this world."

The following day, Edward Umfreville knelt by the side of the baronet's couch, who placed Mary's hand in that of her lover, her hand was as cold as ice; he blessed them both fervently, and then sunk back exhausted. Mary was carried from the chamber in a swoon.

CHAPTER VI.

When we least expect it, the mercy of a divine and all-seeing Providence is extended towards us. Sir Charles Wharton sunk back, as we stated in our last chapter, totally exhausted, and perfectly persuaded that his last hour was come. In this state he lay for many many hours, merely breathing, his medical attendants fully expecting that in that condition he would sink to rest.

But, as they watched, a change came over

the face of the sleeper, and that fearful expression that rests on the features of the dying, but which so often changes when the hand of death is laid on the doomed, into one of peace and calmness, disappeared.

The death-like expression was passing off the Baronet's features, and a slight, a very slight tinge of colour became perceptible on his lips and cheek. Sir Benjamin Carlow started, laid his hand on the Baronet's pulse, and, for an instant, a dead silence reigned in the chamber.

"Ha!" uttered the physician, to the other medical attendant, who stood at the foot of the bed,

"The pulse is returning; it's feeble, but quite perceptible. We must help nature; it is now quite possible he may rally." The physician was right. The following day Sir Benjamin declared the Baronet's life was safe—but Mary, poor Mary, she heard not the joyful intelligence; she lay in a high fever, delirious; and nearly a fortnight elapsed before she became con-

scious of the presence of those about her, and of the past.

With extreme caution, on her partial recovery, was she made acquainted with her uncle's escape from the very grasp of the grim enemy. He was not then able to leave his chamber, but he was out of all danger ; weak, languid, and somewhat dejected, from anxiety. But when the uncle and niece became assured of the other's safety, they began rapidly to mend.

Mary was but a shadow of her former self when at length she sought her uncle's chamber, and threw herself into his arms, weeping long and passionately. Neither spoke of the engagement entered into, it was then thought, at the death-bed of Sir Charles ; each seemed to shun the mention of the name of Umfreville ; and yet, daily, almost hourly, did Edward Umfreville call, and with intense earnestness enquire after Mary.

Our heroine, and her devoted loving friend T  rese Garetti, were sitting one evening ; the latter end of September, in their own

chamber, Mrs. Arbuthnot was indisposed and had retired to rest, her unceasing watching and care of both uncle and niece having nearly exhausted her strength.

It was an unusually cold evening, and Mary was reclining on the sofa, gazing into the cheerful fire that blazed in the grate; her beautiful features were thin, and her cheeks faded and pale, though her eyes were still lustrous and full of deep thought. As she thus sat, with her hands clasped, her whole attitude denoted a heart ill at ease.

"Mary, dear Mary," said T  rese, laying down the book she was perusing, "you must not yield to dejection as you do; you are fretting your life away. Your uncle is strong now; say to him at once this union cannot be. It was to render his last moments easy and happy that you nobly sacrificed yourself; but now the case is different."

"No, dear T  rese," returned Mary, calmly, "it was a solemn engagement, entered into at a solemn moment, and must not be lightly

broken. I will not, now that the Almighty has so mercifully spared my uncle, render his future peace troubled ; his physician declares that for some time his mind must not be disturbed ; it might seriously affect his head. Neither would it be treating Edward Umfreville justly or honourably. But I will tell you what I will do, when I get a little more strength—for he deserves, if not my love, which is not mine to bestow, certainly my esteem and friendship—I will pray to God to enable me to forget one whose image still clings to my heart with a terrible tenacity, and trust that time, and a sense of my situation and duty, will enable me to look upon my future husband with a wife's affections ; but I think it but just and right that I should candidly state to Edward, that, though I give him my hand willingly, and with an earnest wish to return his affection, my love is not mine to bestow."

"Then," exclaimed T  rese, with vivacity,
"Mr. Umfreville will at once release you

from your engagement. I think I can judge of that young man's mind and feelings. If you cannot give him your love, he will not accept your hand. This confession of yours might do if the object of your affection had ceased to exist; but the man you profess to love, lives, and no man, if he has a particle of manly feeling in his breast, will take for a wife a woman whose heart still beats for another. No, no, dear Mary, either confess your attachment to another and break off this unhappy engagement, or marry Edward Umfreville and bury your secret in your heart."

Miss Wharton bowed her fair head upon her hands and wept silently and sadly; for in truth she was bewildered and almost heart-broken.

"My own pride, T  rese," she said, after a long silence, "has caused me all this trouble. You recollect your kind father—when the circumstances occurred, that acted so fatally on the mind of Hugh, causing him to think I was false in my vows to him, and he rashly and hastily sailed from Genoa, without seeking an

explanation —your father said, ‘Let me, dear Mary, undeceive your noble, but rash lover,’ and I replied, ‘No;’ for my pride was roused at the mere idea that he, for one moment, should believe me false; I, who had given him my whole heart—with such feelings of devotion and confidence. If the whole world had said that Hugh De Courcy was false in his vows to me, I should have scorned to have listened to the slanderers. Had I subdued all my false pride, much misery would have been spared me.” Mary sighed heavily. “God direct me,” she continued, “for I am incapable of sound judgment. My uncle’s mind is bent on this union; Mrs. Arbuthnot strongly urges me to fulfil an engagement so solemnly contracted—tells me that it is folly and a want of self-reliance to hesitate; and that to condemn myself to a life of useless repining is both sinful and wrong.”

“Mrs. Arbuthnot is a good and pious woman,” replied Térése; “but she can be no judge of your feelings for Captain De Courcy.

She never saw him ; neither did your uncle—they know not what a gallant noble heart his was ; his love for you was passionate, devoted ; he was cruelly deceived, and his life horribly and treacherously attempted. In the impulse of the moment—in the maddening belief of your faithlessness to him, he gave no time to thought—he acted as his fiery nature dictated ; but, mark my words,” added Tèrese, her eyes sparkling and her manner agitated, “ Mark my words : if you rashly fulfil this engagement—in a manner forced upon you—every hour of your after-life will be poisoned by the bitterest reflections.”

Mary could not reply. She threw her arms round her beloved friend's neck ; she leant her head upon her shoulder, her bosom heaving with contending emotions, and her mind distracted between what she considered her duty and the secret wishes of her own heart.

Several days passed, at the end of which, both

Sir Charles Wharton and his niece were sufficiently recovered to receive their friends.

Mary wanted strength to break the dream of happiness Sir Charles Wharton seemed to indulge, respecting his niece's future establishment. Her first interview with her intended husband, was one of intense agony to her heart. She found it impossible to utter a word, or reply to his most kind and affectionate enquiries, though both Mrs Arbuthnot and T  rese were present. She could not controul her feelings; blinded by his ardent love, Edward Umfreville only saw in her excessive agitation and utter prostration, the effects of the severe shock her nerves had received. Trusting, therefore, that a short time would restore her to her usual health; he solaced himself with the thoughts of the happiness that awaited him in the future, in his union with one to whom he was so tenderly attached.

Sir Charles Wharton, though free from immediate danger, was very far from being perfectly restored to health; his physician advised

a change of scene, and a mild climate for the winter; he therefore intended proposing to his future nephew-in-law, a residence in the Island of Sicily, either Palermo or Messina, for the winter, immediately after his marriage with his niece.

But it was very evident to the affectionate heart of T rese, that Mary would require a change of more than climate, and that before long, or her health would most materially suffer; for the struggle that was taking place in her heart, from a wish to make her uncle happy, was undermining her constitution.

One morning, as Sir Charles was reading the paper, he suddenly let it slip from his hand, exclaiming, with considerable agitation, "God bless my soul, this is—" but, with an effort, he recovered himself, took up the paper, and, with a smile, said, "I am afraid, ladies, I startled you; Mary, my love, you look paler even than usual; but do not be alarmed. It was only a paragraph, that surprised me; I dare say we shall have peace with France

shortly. Bonaparte is now, as Consul for life, the actual ruler of the entire kingdom of France."

The Baronet shortly after retired to his study, carrying the paper with him.

Now the Baronet's manner, and the anxious expression of his countenance, as he looked at his niece, struck both Mary and T  rese ; whether Mrs. Arbuthnot perceived it or not, the two girls could not say ; but they both resolved in their own minds, to get a peep at the *Times* of that day. In general they never looked at the news, but this morning, on reaching her own room, Mary sent her maid, Ph  be, to procure a paper—which was soon obtained.

Miss Wharton took the *Times*, with a strange feeling ; an unaccountable presentiment had taken complete possession of her mind ; and for several moments, she was quite incapable of distinguishing the lines.

T  rese was almost as anxious as herself, for the kind-hearted Genoese was resolved, some

way or other, to break off, what she called a most illomened match. She did not deny but that the Honorable Edward Umfreville was a most amiable young man, and a most desirable union in point of station and fortune; "but what signifies station or fortune?" argued T rese, "when they are coupled with a lacerated heart."

T rese was not so romantic, as to suppose that Mary was going to die for love; no such idea entered her head, or Mary's either—on the contrary, she felt satisfied that her friend would make an exemplary and attentive wife; but she was convinced she never would be a happy one; her thoughts would be for ever on the past; there would ever be a struggle going on in her breast, a desire to repress and banish recollection, and a feeling of self-reproach that her efforts would be fruitless.

They now turned over the pages of the Times with a nervous anxiety; to Mary the lines seemed to run one into the other, till at

length her eyes rested on the heading of a long article, and then she read, with a palpitating heart, the words,

“Arrival in Plymouth of the splendid Neapolitan Frigate, “Serene,” commanded by Captain Count De Courcy.” The paper fell from her hand, whilst she leaned back in her chair, her eyes closed, and looking so like the statue of despair, that T  rese was startled.

“My dear Mary, this is altogether madness. You are not bound to continue this engagement : be candid, see Mr. Umfreville : state to him, as you once said you would, your feelings and your affection for another ; tell him the engagement you entered into, was to ensure peace and tranquillity to your uncle’s last moments.”

“I am quite willing to do so, dear T  rese,” replied Mary Wharton, “the more so, as no word of love has ever passed between me and Edward ; and he is well aware, I never encouraged his attentions ; on the contrary, when I perceived how they tended, I

did all in my power to check a closer intimacy ; he will do me justice, in that, I am sure ; and the occasion of our engagement was so sudden and so overpoweringly painful, I had no power to utter a word ; indeed, thinking my uncle dying, and being certainly convinced I was his child, I became a passive actor in a scene that wrung my heart with anguish. But now, that I think my uncle stronger, and more able to bear what will be a great disappointment to him, I will first speak candidly to him, and then to Mr. Umfreville himself."

"Now my beloved Mary," exclaimed Térésé, her eyes sparkling with joy, "You are about to act with proper judgment, and not rashly rush into a union, that would surely plunge both you and Mr. Umfreville into a life of disappointment, and perhaps misery ; and now," continued her affectionate friend, "let us see, what further this paragraph says, for assuredly, Captain De Courcy, or rather Count de Courcy, I perceive, has come to Eng-

land, for the express purpose of explaining away his strange departure from Genoa."

"Dear Térésé," returned Mary, sadly, "I must not appear to the world, or rather to those who know me intimately, to be acting from caprice or inconsistency. It is known amongst our acquaintances and connections, that I am engaged to Mr. Edward Umfreville—would it not look unfeminine and unmaidenly, were I to cast off a gentleman to whom I willingly engaged myself, and then permit the attentions of another, for I cannot of course give explanations of my conduct and of the past, to all. Therefore, I should, doubtless, be accused of fickleness, or perhaps a harsher interpretation put upon my conduct."

"Come, come Mary," interrupted the sanguine Térésé, "you must not be imagining and conjuring up difficulties and surmises. You cannot compel the world to think as you wish; therefore, let people amuse themselves with ideas, like everything else in *"questa mondo,"* it will only live its hour. Give me

the paper, and let me see what further there is in this paragraph. She then read aloud as follows :—

“ The “ *Serene*” frigate brings the Marquis De Policastro, as envoy extraordinary from the court of Naples, to our gracious Majesty. The “ *Serene*” on her passage from Gibraltar, after a very sanguinary contest, captured a fine French frigate, the “ *Revolutionnaire*,” the particulars of which we cannot at present give. On board the French frigate was Lieutenant Umfreville, a prisoner, who had been picked up at sea, in a crazy boat, with a young midshipman and one seaman.

“ Lieutenant Umfreville is the younger son of Lord Umfreville, of Langford Castle, Hampshire, and was second lieutenant of the “ *Danæ*,” twenty-gun ship commanded by Captain Lord Proby.

“ To this ship there is a melancholy story attached, but which we are not at present at liberty to detail, as most likely it will be the subject of a court martial.

“ Captain Count De Courcy, is, we believe, an Irishman, who from the age of thirteen or fourteen has been in the service of his Majesty King Ferdinand of Naples ; his distinguished gallantry, and several very brilliant exploits performed during the present war, and besides, successful expeditions against the Barbary Corsairs, has obtained him his present title and high command, though scarcely five-and-twenty. *On dit*, that on the Count De Courcy’s return to Naples, he is to receive the—,” Tèrese paused, and her cheek flushed with excitement and indignation.

“ What is there more, cara ?” said Mary, who was listening with wrapt and delighted attention ; her heart beating with a feeling of pride and joy at her former lover’s glory. “ Why do you pause ?”

“ Oh ! I will read it to you, dear Mary,” said Tèrese, “ for I do not believe such nonsense, these newspaper editors can never be satisfied, unless they wind up a paragraph, with some flourish of their own, by way of a finale.

"*On dit*," says the writer of this article, "that the Count De Courcy is to receive, on his return to Naples, the hand of the Princess of Sorento, a lady connected by ties of blood with the Royal family of Naples. She is said to be exceedingly lovely, a widow ; and only two-and-twenty."

"I have not the slightest belief," answered Mary Wharton, "in such reports. I think too highly of Hugh De Courcy, to credit anything of the kind ; but I feel exceeding surprise how such information, partly substantiated by fact, found its way into circulation. The Princess of Sorento, you may remember, is the lady he rescued from the grasp of the Barbary corsairs. Lieutenant Baracco was with him at the time, and, he told us she was a woman of great beauty, and that her gratitude to Captain De Courcy was very great."

"Oh, yes, I remember Lieutenant Baracco telling me that, and also his insinuating at the time, that the Princess would have been not at all loth to change her gratitude into love."

"That, perhaps, might have been the case," returned Mary with the slightest shade of colour tinging her pale cheek, "but I must have stronger proof of De Courcy's fickleness of heart, than a newspaper paragraph. How singular, dear T  rese, that he should, in so strange a manner, release the brother of Mr. Umfreville, from captivity. At all events, whatever may be Hugh De Courcy's intention in coming to England, whether he comes, only compelled by duty, to obey the commands of his sovereign, or from a wish to clear up the mystery of the past, I cannot say, but I now see, it is clearly my duty not to deceive Edward Umfreville into the belief that in obeying the wishes of my dear uncle, I am following the dictates of my own heart."

CHAPTER VII.

It was Miss Wharton's intention to speak to her uncle the following day, when just as the family were sitting down to breakfast, a note was handed to the baronet, in the handwriting of Lord Umfreville's son. Sir Charles opened the note, and then, with an exclamation of, "God bless my soul, how sudden!" laid it down much affected.

"What is the matter, dear uncle?" enquired Mary, in an agitated voice, for latterly she had become exceedingly nervous.

“Why, my old friend, Lord Umfreville, has been alarmingly attacked by the gout, flying to his head, with strong inflammatory symptoms ; his son, writes to say he has left London on the instant, with Sir Benjamin Carlow, and that he fears by the intelligence he received from Southampton, where his lordship is, that there is but little hope of his father’s recovery.

“Good heaven, this is a very sudden calamity,” exclaimed Mary, with emotion ; for besides her kind feelings towards his lordship, who always appeared to treat her with especial attention, and even affection, she felt that this was not the moment to talk of breaking off an engagement with the son ; and that now, most likely, De Courcy would hear of her engagement, and that, without knowing anything of the circumstances that had led to it.

What would his fiery nature think, when this intelligence reached his ear, what would he think of her love for him, but as a passing impression.

There was a great deal of agony in this

thought, to her affectionate and guileless heart.

"His lordship," observed Mrs. Arbuthnot, "I think I heard you say, Sir Charles, is subject to hereditary gout?"

"Yes," returned Sir Charles, "he suffered slightly from it when a young man; and that induced him to travel much, and take great exercise—latterly he has not done so; he is a very large man as you know, and of late years has grown very stout. I greatly fear this attack will have a fatal termination. Edward, my dear Mary, begs me to apologise to you, for leaving without seeing you; but the intelligence was too alarming to allow him making any delay."

Mary's cheeks flushed, as she looked down; but with an effort, she collected sufficient firmness to say, "I wish, dear uncle, to speak with you a few minutes in the library."

"My beloved Mary," said Sir Charles, after a short pause, and without any change of manner, "I anticipate what you would say

to me, and I thought it was likely to come to this. Before such true, kind, and loving friends, who know all the circumstances of the past, and also, how very, very dear you are to me, there is no need of reservation.

“Like a true and noble-hearted child, when you considered we were about to part for ever, you sacrificed the fond affections of your heart to soothe my last moments. My beloved, I did not then think this love—I see your cheek flushes: do not be ashamed of it.”

“Oh no, uncle,” interrupted his niece, though the tears fell from her eyes, “I am proud of it—for, believe me, I would not have bestowed my affections on an unworthy object.”

“Of that I am satisfied;” said Sir Charles, “but I was saying, I did not think this love had such deep root in your heart; and knowing that Edward Umfreville possessed every qualification to make a woman happy, I thought I should be securing your future felicity

by a union with him. But latterly my eyes have been opened ; I see, plainly enough, the ravages that a forced consent to my wishes is making in your health, and determined, a few days back, to speak to you on the subject ; particularly when I discovered, from a conversation I had with Edward, he seemed to fear that though he had gained your consent to become his wife, you still withheld your love ; and asked me, earnestly, had you formed any attachment to another when abroad. I answered him candidly, that you had. He pressed my hand, considerably moved and agitated, and as he left me he said, ‘ We have both been too hard on poor Mary. In a day or two I will speak to her myself. On that interview my destiny depends ;’ and he left me.”

Mary was leaning her head upon T  rese’s shoulder, weeping freely, for she felt, do what she would, she must be the cause of suffering to others ; and her gentle, affectionate heart, was grieved.

"At this present moment," continued Sir Charles, "it would be cruel to add to Edward Umfreville's uneasiness—he will himself return to the subject of our last conversation; then leave it to me, dear Mary, to set things right. There is another matter, my love, I wish to speak to you upon," continued Sir Charles, "and that is, that Captain—I perceive they give him the title of Count—that Captain De Courcy is now in England."

"I knew it, dear uncle," said Mary Wharton; "I read his arrival in the paper."

"I thought as much," returned her uncle, with an affectionate smile; "I roused your curiosity the other morning, and I suppose you were resolved to gratify it: so like your sex."

"Nay, Sir Charles," said Mrs. Arbuthnot, with a smile, "I must defend my sex—do not imagine curiosity a feeling only existing in the female breast."

"Take care, Sir Charles," exclaimed Tèrese, her gay smile returning, seeing that affairs were

likely to turn out happily for her beloved friend ; “ take care, or you will have a hornet’s nest about your ears, if you attempt to maintain your opinion.”

“ Then fair T  rese I surrender at discretion ; but you must know, that the Neapolitan envoy has arrived in London, and taken up his abode at the——hotel, which has been fitted up for him and his attendants. Captain De Courcy is still in Plymouth, I heard yesterday ; I believe he has received some wounds, but not dangerous ones, in a most furious, and, I am sorry to say, very sanguinary contest with the French frigate.

“ Young Umfreville is with him ; if he has not as yet heard of his father’s illness. There is some sad story about his ship ; but I have not heard the particulars. A mutiny I believe ; all I know is, that the ship is lost. Now the best thing we can all do, after I have had an interview with Edward, is to leave England and go to Palermo, and pass some time there ; it will be the best place for all parties. What do you

say, Mary—indeed what say you all? You know, Térése, your father promised, when we made up our minds and let him know our plans, that he would join us at Palermo.”

“Oh, let us go to Sicily by all means,” exclaimed the little party assembled round the breakfast table.

“It will,” said Mrs. Arbuthnot, “restore you and dear Mary to perfect health.”

Two or three days after this conversation, intelligence reached Sir Charles that Lord Umfreville had ceased to exist. This event plunged the whole family into affliction; for they all greatly esteemed his lordship. Both his sons were by their father’s couch; he was perfectly sensible for a few hours before death. Besides this distressing intelligence, Mary and Térése were secretly uneasy; for it was known to them that Captain Count De Courey was in London, and had been presented at Court by the Earl of ——. The London journals also spoke of his very distinguished appearance, his handsome and prepossessing coun-

tenance ; but for so young and so fortunate a commander, remarkably serious and reserved.

"He has heard of my engagement," said Mary, with a sigh ; "and his proud nature is naturally roused, and he refrains from any communication."

"Then Sir Charles ought to communicate with him," said T rese.

"Oh, certainly not," exclaimed Mary ; "that, dearest, would not be correct. Recollect, I am still under an engagement, which, till dissolved, must be considered sacred. Our reconciliation must be a work of time."

"Well, pardon me," returned T rese, with vivacity, "I was born half an Italian, and I suppose have half an Italian's nature ; I confess I could not exist and be playing at cross purposes with the man I love, and the man that loves me. Heigho, do you know, Mary, it's very strange, but I was never in love : and I am positively twenty-two next birthday, and you are not eighteen."

"Hush, dear T rese, hush;" interrupted Mary, with more colour in her cheeks than for several weeks previously, "do not boast; your turn will come by and bye, when least expected."

Whilst this conversation was taking place in Sir Charles Wharton's mansion, another was being carried on in a well-known club-room in St. James's-street.

"Who is this much-talked-of Captain Count De Courcy?" said young Lord Eglin, to an officer in an infantry regiment with whom he was conversing and lounging against the window frame, twisting his moustach , and gazing at the dames passing by in order to enter St. James's Park.

"How the deuce should I know," returned Captain Manby, "uncommon handsome fellow, by jove, half the women are raving about him already."

"A proud, upstart adventurer, most likely," returned his lordship sarcastically.

"Why the deuce do you call him an adven-

rurer," exclaimed Captain Manby, looking surprised, "because he bears your family name? for now I remember, your mother was a De Courcy."

"That's precisely the reason I think him an adventurer; there is no male branch of the Irish De Courcy living; and he calls himself an Irishman. My mother was one of two sisters; they were the last of the Irish De Courcys."

"Well, I am a very poor hand, your lordship knows," said Captain Manby, "for remembering."

"But I do not want you to remember," said his lordship, petulantly; and then, with a sneer, added, "you remember, I dare say, that your grandfather was breeches maker to the Duke of ———."

Captain Manby, though he coloured highly, laughed, he was Lord Eglin's toady, and could not afford to do anything else than laugh, no matter what his lordship said.

"I heard a curious story lately," said Captain Manby, wishing to forget his grandfather.

"What is it?" enquired Lord Eglin, "any scandal, for I have been out of town lately."

"No, there's no scandal in it," returned the Captain, "you know the fair lady to whom your cousin Lord Umfreville is engaged."

"Oh yes," remarked his lordship, with an angry curl of the lip, "Miss Wharton; the girl is handsome enough, but as capricious as the weather, which, by the bye, is cursedly annoying. I had but two fair days during the past fortnight; worst shooting I ever had—but what of Miss Wharton—has she jilted my cousin Edward? I suspected something of the sort would happen; for, upon my soul, I never could see much love in her manner to him; I positively thought I had the best chance if I could have brought myself to the point; but go on, let me hear your story, and then I will have a game of billiards with you; I beat you the odd rubber yesterday, and you are in my debt a cool hundred."

"You play too good a game, my lord," said

the Captain, with a peculiar look back at a gentleman standing near them; "I cannot give you those odds again."

"Let us have your story, and I will play you even, for the same sum," observed Lord Eglin.

"Well," replied Captain Manby, making a sign behind his back, which the gentleman near them evidently understood, for he at once left the room.

"It is now said, in certain circles, that this handsome Count De Courcy is come to England to look after his runaway lady-love, and that this run-away fair one is the much-admired and beautiful Miss Wharton."

"The deuce! is that the report?" cried Lord Eglin. "Where on earth did you pick that up?"

"At the ——— billiard rooms, a fortnight ago," answered the Captain; "there was a foreigner—a Neapolitan, I think, playing there; and an uncommon game he plays, and stakes his money freely."

"And wins, I dare say?" remarked his lordship.

"Yes; he bagged a couple of hundred from Sir George Temple."

"How came this foreigner," enquired Lord Eglin, "to speak of such a circumstance in a billiard-room, and that a public one?"

"Why, though the ——— billiard rooms are public, they are frequented, as you know, both by noblemen, gentlemen, and foreigners; and the stakes played there are high. You know Sir George Temple is one of the very best players, and this Italian gave him five in fifty, for a hundred a-game, and beat him; and I know he kept back his game."

"'I'll back you against any man in London,' exclaimed Sir George.

"'I'd back myself,' said the Italian, 'two to one, against any one in England, except Captain Count De Courcy.'

"'Ha!' exclaimed Sir George, 'I have met this gallant Captain De Courcy; and is he a billiard player?'

“ ‘ He owes his fortune to it,’ returned this Italian ; ‘ he is a favourite, and some say, and I believe it is a fact, that he is the son of the Neapolitan Minister Acton. He applied for the command of the frigate that brought the Neapolitan Envoy to England ; the niece of a wealthy English baronet, to whom he had been betrothed, abroad, gave him the slip, and he has followed her. Wharton, I think was the name.’

“ ‘ Whilst the Italian was telling this strange story, several gentlemen present gathered round ; but immediately after the Italian left the rooms.’”

“ ‘ Well, upon my soul,’ exclaimed young Ponsonby, who was present, ‘ I think that Italian has been telling an abominable lie. I do not believe one word of his story. I met this Count de Courcy at the Marchioness de ———’s assembly, the other night ; he is one of the finest-looking young men I ever saw, and a most perfect gentleman ; besides, his exploits in the Neapolitan navy are well known ;

and as to any girl, and of all persons, the elegant and accomplished Miss Wharton, jilting him, it's a farce. Does any one know that man who has just left the room?"

" 'I have seen him here several times,' remarked one or two gentlemen present, 'but know nothing of him.'

" 'If I see him again,' remarked Lord Ponsonby's son, 'as a friend of Lord Umfreville's, I will know who he is, and his motive for spreading such a story.'

"Now this scandal," added Captain Manby, "has got wind, and crept into the higher circles, for there chanced to be many young men of family in ——— rooms that night."

"I think the tale very probable," said Lord Eglin, "I shall meet this Captain De Courcy at the Earl of ———, who invites the Neapolitan Envoy and his suite after to-morrow. I will take an opportunity of asking him to what family of the De Courcys he belongs." His Lordship and his friend then proceeded to the club billiard rooms, and when his lordship left, they

remained debtor to Captain Manby's friend £400 ; he having backed the worthy captain every game ; his lordship won the two first games ; but afterwards, when the bets were doubled, the captain won, and always by what appeared to be a fluke, that is a chance stroke, and not played for.

"You have monstrous luck, Manby," remarked his lordship.

"Uncommon run," returned his companion, "almost every second stroke a fluke, I should have no chance with you, my lord, but for luck."

CHAPTER VIII.

To bring our story, and our characters, clearly and distinctly before our readers, we must retrace our steps to the fair city of Palermo, previous to the departure of our hero for England.

Ferdinand the Fourth of Naples, after his arrival in that city, felt so pleased with the care, conduct, and skill of the commander of the frigate "Serene," that he created him a

Count of the Neapolitan kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

De Courcy would just as willingly have remained Captain of the "Serene," without the title; but his Majesty, not content with the title alone, bestowed upon him and his heirs, a small but beautiful estate on the Island, near Catania, belonging to the crown. Our hero felt certainly exceeding gratitude to his Majesty, and expressed his sentiments for the munificence of the King upon the proper occasion.

Being anxious, beyond measure, to proceed to England—Mary Wharton being never absent from his thoughts—for the letter given him by Sir John had fully convinced him, that not one iota of his love for Mary was lost; he therefore longed to reach England, to throw himself at her feet and implore her forgiveness; at the same time, explain to her how he had been misled, and induced to behave with so much apparent mystery and precipitation.

De Courcy had to await the arrival of Sir John and the Marquis de Policastri, the envoy from Naples; as it soon became to be hinted in Palermo, that a formidable and dangerous conspiracy against the King and Royal Family existed in Naples; but the entire body of conspirators, except a very few, were secured—and shortly after, several executions took place, and the names of some of the members of the Caraccioli society were made public, and the astonishment that ensued was great.

Our hero meanwhile frequently met the Princess of Sorento in the parties and fêtes that followed the king's arrival in Palermo; and it was observed by many that the spirits of the once gay Princess had greatly diminished; that she had become subject to fits of abstraction and even depression.

To the Count De Courcy her manner was uniformly kind, and even tender. Being anything but a vain man, it was impossible for

our hero not to perceive her preference for his society, and the pleasure it gave her.

The mansion the Princess of Sorrento owned and inhabited in Palermo, was situated in the Obruza, which may be styled one of the suburbs of the city, and certainly one of the loveliest spots in the whole valley. The fine remains of old Moorish fortresses or castles, still in excellent preservation, called Kriba and Zisa, adding to the romance and beauty of the locality. The Princess's residence was one of the handsomest in the Obruza; the gardens were of great extent, and many of those beautiful and magnificent trees, the date-palm, flourished luxuriantly in them. No expense was spared in decorating those gardens; for the Obruza had been the favourite residence of the Princess's husband, and after his death his rules were never neglected; almost all the tropical plants flourished in those gardens, and the varieties of the cacti, were numerous and gorgeous—the fuschia grew beneath the camphor and the gum tree;

the sweet heliotrope, and the lovely Floxilia bloomed amid a luxuriant verdure.

To this retreat and its beautiful grounds the Princess collected a very select party. Our hero was one of the invited ; the following day Sir John Acton and the Marquis de Policastri were expected.

We do not intend to delay our readers with a description of this assemblage, chiefly held in the gardens of the mansion, which were brilliantly and tastefully illuminated with devices in parti-coloured lamps.

It was a real Italian night, the air so soft and balmy, breathing in that happy clime the very essence of love. Amidst the luxuriance of nature, and the most delicious odour from the rare plants and flowers, the cavalieros and their fair dames wandered in happy forgetfulness of everything but the enjoyment of the hour.

The Princess herself, had never looked more lovely than on that night. She was walking gently along a most beautiful avenue,

covered with the rich-deep crimson blossoms of the oleander; amid which peeped here and there the pretty coloured lamps that lighted the gay party in their walks. She was leaning on the arm of Captain De Courcy, and for some moments neither spoke, finding themselves pursuing a walk, free from a single intruder.

The Princess raising her beautiful eyes from the walk, suddenly looked up into the serious, handsome features of her visitor; there was a sadness in her look, as her eyes met those of our hero, that pained him, and at length she said, "Captain De Courcy, it grieves me to say, you have a bitter, and I fear me, a most unrelenting enemy."

"We can seldom pass through life, Princess, without some trial; mine has been a fortunate career, having many friends, and kind, generous ones. I can afford to have one enemy."

"Still, that one enemy," continued the Princess, seriously, "may poison the cup. When you first returned from the siege of

Genoa, I received, as I think I mentioned, an anonymous letter, narrating some particulars of what had occurred to you in Genoa."

"I remember, Princess, since then I have had reason to believe that the letter you mentioned was written by one whom I then esteemed as a friend. His name is now known as a traitor to his King, and I may say, that I feel satisfied that the writer of the letter you mention, was Guissepe Baracco, whom you may remember was first lieutenant of the "Vesuvius," at the time we had the good fortune to rescue you and the Prince de — from the corsairs."

The Princess suppressed a sigh, saying, "I grieve to hear you say so, as you must feel the cruel deception practised upon you. Where is this Baracco now?"

"That I cannot possibly guess, Princess," answered our hero, then briefly relating to her the manner in which Baracco had escaped.

The Princess seemed deeply interested; there was a pause of a moment, as De Courcy

concluded—and then she said, “this Baracco is without doubt, the mortal enemy I warned you of just now, and it is very clear, that he either watches you himself, or he has agents and spies that do.”

“Yesterday,” she continued, in a low voice, “I received this letter.” She was taking one from her vest, when she chanced to raise her eyes, with a wild shriek, so fearful and so piercing, that it rung through the whole garden, she threw her arms wildly round De Courcy’s neck, and the same instant, the gleam of a steel poniard passed before his eyes, entered the shoulder of the Princess, who, with a low moan, and a shudder that shook her whole frame, became insensible.

De Courcy could only see the hand, for the blow was struck over his own shoulder, and evidently intended for his heart; with the Princess’s arms clasped round his neck, he was incapable of other exertion than to seize the wrist of his opponent with his left hand, and with a powerful wrench to tear the dagger

from his grasp, he then saw the figure of a man dash through the thick flowery shrubs and disappear; by this time he was surrounded with crowds of alarmed and horror-struck guests.

"Search the gardens for the assassin," exclaimed the greatly shocked De Courcy; lifting the insensible form of the Princess, who was bleeding profusely, in his arms, he carried her to the house, ordering the Physician to be instantly sent for; the confounded cavaleros rushed with drawn swords through the gardens, whilst the ladies followed to the house, in a state of intense alarm, wonder, and confusion; fortunately there was a physician present, belonging to the King's household, and he instantly hastened to the Princess.

"De Courcy, trembling with agitation, and fear of its being a fatal wound, delivering the still insensible form of the Princess to the care of her distracted women and the physician, hurried into the garden, and met the different gentlemen returning from a fruitless search.

"Good God, Captain De Courcy," exclaimed the Marquis De Panigi, "how has this terrible event occurred? Have you any idea of the cause, or who is the assassin?"

"I may suspect, Marquis," answered De Courcy, "who the assassin is: but the blow was intended for me, and by a sudden movement of the princess, the villain struck her."

"Who do you suspect to be the assassin?" cried several voices.

"As I may be wrong, gentlemen, it may be as well for the present, to let the supposed culprit's name remain unknown."

Never was a pleasure-party so abruptly and terribly interrupted, the Princess was greatly loved by all, especially by the poorer classes of Palermo—

De Courcy did not quit the house; he waited to see or hear from the two Physicians, and remained in a saloon, labouring under an overpowering sensation of mental distress.

As he paced the chamber, with agitated steps, one of the Princess's ladies entered,

she was very pale, but still her manner gave him relief.

"She has recovered her senses Count," returned the lady, "and I thank the Madonna. The Physicians say, by an extraordinary chance or rather we should say interposition of Providence, the steel was diverted from a mortal part by a diamond zone, which the dagger, struck against."

"Thank God!" returned De Courcy, fervently.

"The Princess's first words were for you Count," said the Signora, in a significant tone. "She demanded, in a faint voice, if you had escaped."

De Courcy was troubled and much moved; but mastering his emotion, he begged the lady to state to the Princess, when able to bear conversation, his deep and lasting gratitude and his earnest prayer for her recovery.

The lady then retired, and De Courcy in

a frame of mind not easily described returned to Palermo.

This occurrence created a most universal feeling of detestation against the villain who had attempted the assassination of the Princess as it was first thought amongst the people of Palermo. Mounted sbrri, and sbrri-on foot, hunted every hole and corner of the country and suburbs, the country was traversed, every suspicious looking personage examined, large rewards offered, nothing was neglected. The Queen herself drove over in the morning to the Princess's villa, and the King instantly sent for De Courcy, to hear the true account from himself.

King Ferdinand listened attentively and when our hero concluded, said in his short manner, "Well, Count, please the saints, she will recover. You have our consent to offer your hand to the Princess." De Courcy coloured to the temples; "it's the least you can do," continued his majesty, "and it will be expected."

Our hero muttered something, about honour and deep gratitude, not very plainly intelligible to the king, for His Majesty immediately said, and perhaps his voice was, or De Courcy thought it a little sharp. "You do not hesitate Count De Courcy, in offering your hand to the fairest lady in our dominions, and one also connected with ourselves."

"Certainly not, your Majesty," returned De Courcy, with difficulty suppressing a sigh of bitter regret, for the Rubican was passed, he must for ever lose His Majesty's favour; the King was tenacious to a degree of contradiction to his wishes; added to that, deep gratitude, to the Princess. His knowledge of her affection for him left him so moved and agitated by conflicting feelings, that he became scarcely conscious of what he said, so that he left His Majesty's presence, who graciously gave him his hand to kiss, with the full persuasion that it was his undoubted intention, the moment the Princess was sufficiently recovered, to throw himself at her feet, and solicit her hand.

Bewildered and stupified by the strange rapidity in which events followed each other, and which seemed, do what he would, to throw him into situations contrary to the real feelings of his heart. That he felt deep gratitude to the Princess he could not deny ; that he esteemed and admired her, was also true ; but his love and devotion was for another. No one could accuse him of paying either marked or particular attention to the Princess ; so at least he thought ; and no doubt in his heart he was sincere, but others did not think so.

The next day Sir John Acton arrived from Naples ; the Marquis De Policastri was as yet on a mission in Calabria, but would, in the course of a week, be in Palermo. The Princess was pronounced out of danger, but her confinement would be long.

Our hero was for a long time in conversation with King Ferdinand's minister.

"You look gloomy and miserable, Hugh," remarked Sir John, "and you near the top

step of the ladder, and not five-and-twenty. I hoped to have congratulated you, after my interview with the King, instead of which, you appear, as if sentence of death had been passed upon you."

"Being acquainted with the state of my feelings, and my devotion for another," replied De Courcy, gravely, "would, I should think, account sufficiently for my dejection of look and spirits."

"I think," said Sir John, "that if instead of permitting your mind to dwell upon, and nourish a feeling, that may be, after all, an *"ignis fatuus,"* you were to return the affections of a woman who devotedly and nobly threw herself between you and an assassin's knife and who is one of the loveliest in Italy, you would shew your gratitude and your good sense at the same time. The King and Queen now fully expect you to offer yourself to the Princess; to draw back would be a folly. Had you spoken candidly to the King when he addressed you on the subject, you might have

had a chance of still retaining his favor ; to draw back now, would be to mar your fortune in his Majesty's service for ever."

" My dear Sir John," replied De Courcy, almost sternly, " do you for a moment suppose I was actuated in what I said or did by a fear of losing rank, station, or fortune ? If you did, permit me to correct your error. I would have resigned all favours I ever received at His Majesty's hands, without a sigh of regret, sooner than enter into an engagement repugnant to my feelings. No ; I was actuated in what I did say, by a deep feeling of gratitude towards a woman who freely staked life to shield me, knowing at the same time, that that woman did so from love ; I am not vain, neither am I afraid that you will think me so ; so now let this subject rest ; you may depend, I will do what I conceive it my duty to do."

" I am not offended, Hugh," said the Minister, holding out his hand, " though you speak somewhat harshly to me ; for you know right well I have loved you from a child, and have

no other wish than for your welfare. I have a feeling, a kind of presentiment, that my career at the Neapolitan court draws to a close. I do not regret it; I covet a life of repose after one of excitement and agitation. I intend purchasing an estate in this beautiful island; so that when the time comes, I may find a port, as we sailors say, to cast anchor in, and ride out the tide of life, free from the storms of the political world."

De Courcy pressed Sir John's hand, warmly, saying, "Excuse my hasty words, dear sir. You know not how troubled this late event has made me."

"I have no doubt of it, Hugh; it is all that villain Baracco's work; I am satisfied; he has baffled every attempt I made to entrap him; I thought he must have left the kingdom. Do you suppose it was he himself who struck the blow?"

"No, I should say not," answered our hero, "the wrist I grasped was a thin, wiry one, with not half the bone and sinew of Baracco,

who is a large, strong man, and the dagger is little better than a butcher's knife."

"Ah, per bacco, there is no want of hired assassins in this island ; those rascally Tanners would murder any one for half-a-ducat. You must be careful, especially at night ; but in a day or so you will be off ; this villain's designs will be frustrated. By the bye, I have changed my mind respecting the packet I gave you. When you reach England, should any circumstance occur that you consider your knowledge of ascertaining who you are beneficial to you, open it, and act as you think fit. I am ready to come forward to substantiate facts, if necessary."

CHAPTER IX.

THE "Serene" was to sail in a day or two. The Marquis De Policastri had arrived ; and all things were ready for the voyage to England.

The Princess de Sorento had partially recovered, and was now able to see a few friends.

De Courcy was unremitting in his inquiries and attention ; his remarkable seriousness and avoidance of all society, and confining himself entirely on board his ship, excited considerable curiosity and much remark—but

De Courcy cared little about being a subject of conversation to the gay courtiers of King Ferdinand's court.

He waited for an interview with the Princess with intense anxiety. At length the very day before he was to sail for England, a message from the Princess caused the blood to rush to his heart with a painful violence; he was quite aware that Queen Caroline had already spoken to the Princess upon the subject of their union, and that, in fact, every one in and about the court looked upon the matter of a matrimonial alliance between him and the the Princess, as an affair entirely settled.

With a palpitating heart De Courcy entered the saloon, where the Princess, seated on an ottoman, and propped with cushions, was waiting to receive him. It was evening, and a soft, subdued light entered through the closed blinds. Clarina Obruzzo was still very pale, and a good deal reduced in person.

Hugh De Courcy took the fair hand held out to him, with considerable emotion, and

carried it to his lips if not with a lover's warmth, at all events, with a profound feeling of admiration and gratitude—for he was deeply affected—perceiving the Princess must have suffered greatly, and for him; he saw, also, that she was agitated, and that her hand trembled in his; and that a faint color came to her cheek. Taking a chair, De Courcy sat down beside the lady, almost as agitated as herself. Clarina Obruza first broke the silence that followed De Courcy's warm and affectionate words expressive of his grief at his having been the cause of so much suffering, and how deep and lasting his gratitude and admiration would be for her noble sacrifice of self in saving him.

"It would be useless, Hugh De Courcy," said the Princess, in a low and agitated voice, "for me now to deny the motive of my conduct; a young and timid girl would shrink from such an avowal, but I make it, for this reason; that we meet now for the last time."

"Clarina," exclaimed Dé Courcy, in a voice of real emotion, "why those words?"

"Because, Hugh De Courcy, I would again, if not save your life, save you from wrecking your future felicity from a feeling of gratitude. Do not interrupt me; I do not blame you; but listen to me. I am not ignorant of what passed between you and King Ferdinand, and that he, in a measure, commanded you to offer me your hand."

"Nay, Clarina," interposed our hero, "on my soul such was not the case. If I have not thrown myself at your feet, and sued as a lover might be proud to sue for this fair hand, it is because—."

"You had no heart to bestow," interrupted the Princess, calmly; but in a low touching voice.

"Not, Clarina," said De Courcy, "a sole and undivided heart, such as the Princess de Sorento had a right to expect; but nevertheless, believe me," and he took her thin wasted, but still very lovely hand, in his, "you

should never have to complain of my devotion and earnest affection. A life devoted to your happiness,—”

“ No, no, no, Hugh,” said the Princess, with difficulty suppressing the tears that bespoke how much she suffered, and how sincere her love was, “ No, this must not be—hear my reasons. When you returned from Genoa, I heard of your love affair in that city, and as I was led to believe a mere passing fancy for a pretty face—but I know differently now. You gave your love to a young, and accomplished maiden of your own northern clime; I know also that treachery and deceit, and an attempt on your life, drove you from her, who loved you well: You believed her false, whilst she was true and devoted; and that now having discovered your error, and the treachery of a false villain, you ardently long to repair your error, and throw yourself at her feet and renew your engagement. Is not this the true state of your heart?”

“ Clarina, such was the state of my mind, .”

replied our hero, in a serious tone, "previous to your generous and noble act; but now—."

The Princess shook her head, and with a faint, a very faint smile, one more of anguish than ought else, said, "Say no more, De Courcy, on this painful subject. I sent for you on purpose to tell you not to be uneasy at the King's displeasure; leave him to me to manage. From Lady Acton I have learned all I now know. She knows your feelings; and she well knew I should never feel happy with a divided heart; therefore go to England, and bestow on her who deserves your love that affection that is hers by right; and if ever we should meet again, let us meet as friends; for, believe me, you have not one more sincere than Clarina Obruza." As she said those words, she touched a silver bell upon the table, and two of her ladies immediately entered the room.

De Courcy, with a flushed cheek, rose from his seat, for he perceived clearly enough, that the Princess had summoned her ladies in order

to end a somewhat painful scene ; he therefore took the hand held out to him, kissed it reverentially, and hoping that she would shortly be restored to perfect health, quitted the chamber with a disturbed and troubled mind.

The day after this interview, the " Serene" sailed for Malta and England.

Nothing of moment occurred during the voyage to Malta, which place had the day before surrendered to the British. Leaving the despatches he carried with the English Admiral, the " Serene" continued her voyage.

De Courcy, on first leaving Palermo, felt exceedingly depressed, and continued so, till on reaching Malta, the excitement and the bustle attending the surrender of the place, and the animating sight the place itself presented, roused his energies ; and, exerting himself, he strove to render the rest of the voyage more agreeable to the Marquiss de Policastri, and the gentlemen accompanying him.

His orders were to avoid, if possible, an encounter with the enemy ; therefore, after passing

Gibraltar a most careful watch was kept, day and night whilst a succession of nor-easterly gales, towards the middle of September, kept the "Serene," beating to windward along the Spanish Coast. One morning, just at daylight in a thick mist, they came close up with a fine seventy-four gun ship, of whose vicinity they were not aware till within musket shot, when the stranger, immediately shewed the tri-colour flag. Captain De Courcy at once hoisted the same flag, and edged away from his dangerous neighbour, for it was blowing fresh, and the fog lifting.

The stranger immediately hoisted the private signal, and this not being answered, she bore up after the "Serene," discharging her bow guns at the same time. The "Serene," then hoisted Neapolitan colours, returning the fire with her heavy stern guns, which knocked the fore-top-galant mast of the seventy-four over the side; this so enraged the Frenchman, that yawing intending to treat his puny antagonist to a broadside, but De Courcy,

suspecting the object, baffled the enemy, and hoisting every stitch of canvass rapidly increased his distance, aided by the fog, which fortunately, lasted; and, altering his course, lost sight of his opponent altogether.

Two days afterwards, with a light wind at nor-west, the "Serene," discovered a sail right a-head crossing their course; the stranger observed them also, and hauling his wind, awaited their approach.

"What do you think she is, Count?" said the Marquis De Policastri, who was walking the deck, as our hero stood regarding the stranger through his glass.

"A large frigate, Marquis," replied De Courcy; "and whether British or French, it will be difficult, in this light wind, to avoid her."

"It appears a much larger vessel than the Serene," observed the Marquis, "however, Count, if you cannot avoid her, your must, I suppose, fight her;" adding, with a smile, "I fancy the last alternative will be the most agreeable to you."

"There is not much disgrace," returned our hero, "in running away from a seventy-four; but this stranger is a pretty good match if he be French, of which I feel sure he is; he brings a good breeze with him, and we are nearly becalmed."

Every one became on the alert, on board the "Serene;" the crew, consisting of fighting men, and not accustomed when in the old "Vesuvius," to run away; and the idea of a contest with the stranger was joyful news, every man flying to his post with alacrity.

"You had better go below, my Lord Marquis," said De Courcy, addressing the Neapolitan envoy. "Your life is too important to be risked; and the enemy is, I perceive, a heavily armed frigate of more than forty guns."

"Oh, no," returned the Marquis, very quietly, "if we are to fight, I am not going to run away, Count, I assure you. I never saw a naval engagement, and I am curious. Ha! there goes the stranger's bunting, a splendid craft indeed." The strange vessel now within

two musket shots, hoisted the revolutionary flag, took in his royals, and made every preparation for a contest, if necessary.

The "Serene" was equally prepared, and both vessels having now a fine working breeze, and both having their national flag flying, prepared for a determined contest.

The French vessel was a forty-four-gun frigate, and with her full complement of men—as it afterwards appeared, with much heavier metal than the "Serene."

The Neapolitan frigate was on the larboard tack, with the wind from the north-north-west. The French ship passed within one hundred yards to windward of the "Serene," and both ships exchanged broadsides; the French commander hailing the Neapolitan to surrender—upon which the "Serene's" crew gave a hearty cheer of derision.

The "Revolutionaire," for that was the French ship's name, tacked, whilst the "Serene" bore up, each ship contriving to fire as her guns bore.

The "Serene" having paid off and got before the wind, brought her larboard broadside to bear; the "Revolutionaire" then put her helm a starboard, and sheered off. A furious cannonade was then maintained on both sides; the yard-arms nearly locking, until the "Revolutionaire," ranging a-head crossed the "Serene's" bows. So murderous, and well-directed was the fire of the "Serene's" guns, that the deck of the French vessel was slippery with blood, and sixteen of her crew lay dead and dying, and numbers wounded besides.

On the deck of the "Serene" five men were killed and thirteen wounded, Hugh de Courcy himself slightly, in two places; his second lieutenant severely, was carried below; the *Mârquis de Policastri* was also wounded slightly in the arm, but still insisted in remaining on deck, feeling the greatest enthusiasm.

As the French ship paid off, the "Serene," with her starboard guns, poured in a raking fire, which was badly returned, wounding, however, a young midshipman, and the first

Lieutenant, and cutting the main sheet. De Courcy, watching his opportunity, and having the men prepared, ran right on board the enemy, and getting locked together, he sprang on the deck, followed by his eager and determined crew. As they did so, the main and mizen mast of the "Revolutionaire" fell fore and aft, whilst the crew firing beneath the sails, they caught fire. During this terrible scene, De Courcy leaped in upon the enemy's quarter-deck. The captain of the "Revolutionaire" firing his pistol, the ball of which broke his left arm near the elbow, but the next moment, De Courcy's sword passed through his body; when a scene of furious contention ensued, in the midst of which a young man, an Englishman, a lad, and a sailor, also English, rushed to the side of De Courcy, supplying themselves with weapons from the deck; and, with a cheer, joined in the fight. They were prisoners, and had just contrived to escape from below, after a contest of twenty minutes, fierce and bloody for the time, the

captain and the first lieutenant being slain, and several of the other officers *hors de combat*; the ship surrendered, and all hands united in extinguishing the flames.

De Courcy, besides having his left arm broken, was wounded in several places, by cutlass-pikes. The enemy, besides their captain, first lieutenant and third, slain, had one hundred and seven wounded—some severely, some dangerously. After some difficulty the fire was subdued, and the vessels separated, immediately after the fore-mast of the “*Revolutionnaire*” went over the side.

This contest was one of the most determined on both sides; as De Courcy ascertained, afterwards, that Captain Jean Bon Audri vowed he would take the “*Serene*” or perish.

De Courcy recollected that Captain Jean Bon Audri had been formerly Captain of the “*Sans Culotte*,” corvette, of twenty-two guns, which he captured the year before, off the Neapolitan coast near Gaete, after a severe contest in the *Vesuvius* brig. It was blowing a gale

at the time, and the French captain, after a contest of thirty-five minutes, ran the corvette ashore under a French battery of four guns, and then he and his crew deserted her. Our hero, nevertheless, boarded her under a heavy fire from the battery, and destroyed her.

The loss on board the "Revolutionaire," was exceedingly severe.

After his arm was set, and his wounds dressed, our hero recollected the young man, and his companion who so gallantly joined in the fight; and making enquiries, he soon found them. The young man was suffering from a severe contusion.

Perceiving at once that he was a gentleman and a sailor, De Courcy insisted on having him conveyed to his cabin; requesting, at the same time, to know his name.

"Thank you, thank you," said the stranger, "you are very kind, my name is Umfreville, Lieutenant Umfreville."

"What!" exclaimed our hero in great sur-

prise, "son of Lord Umfreville, and brother to my old college friend?"

The stranger looked exceedingly surprised, but replied, "Such is the case; and I pray you extend your kindness to the young lad, and the sailor with me—the former is a midshipman; we all belonged to the unfortunate "Danæ."

De Courcy accordingly had Lieutenant Umfreville, and the young midshipman, who was unhurt, established in comfortable berths, and the sailor with them taken care off.

With the wreck of the masts and spars jury-masts were rigged the following day, upon the "Revolutionaire," and with his prize, De Courcy shaped his course for Plymouth, where he safely arrived.

During the voyage, he received from Lieutenant Umfreville, to whom he communicated the particulars of his intimacy and friendship with his brother, the following account of the loss of the "Danæ."

The "Danæ" was a twenty-gun ship, commanded by Captain Lord Proby.

"We were watching the French fleet in Brest," said Lieutenant Umfreville, "and had just returned from joining in the chase of the Pallas, which vessel was captured by the Lorri Captain Newman; we had unfortunately on board the "Danæ," some of the men who had mutinied at the Nore; the worst amongst them was a man named Jackson; he was one of the Captains of the fore-top, this fellow was Parker's secretary in the Nore Mutiny. It was about ten o'clock at night, and I believe most of the officers were in bed, except Lord Proby, a marine officer, the master, and myself; I was sitting in my berth, when I heard a desperate scuffle overhead; I started up, and as I entered the cabin where Lord Proby was, the marine officer rushed down the stairs, saying, 'the crew have mutinied, and cut down the master, and thrown him down the main-hatch-way, they have battened down the grating, and placed over it the boats filled with shot.*'

*Fact.

Lord Proby made a rush, all present following, to get up the after hatchway, but we found this guarded by more than thirty men ; one of the ruffians made a cut at Lord Proby, striking him on the head. I had a loaded pistol in my hand, which I instantly fired at the man, and he fell ; we were forced back, however, and by this time we found that about thirty or more of the trustworthy portion of the crew had joined us.

“ After a strict search we mustered a dozen cutlasses, a few muskets, and half-a-dozen pistols.

“ ‘ Our only hope,’ said our Commander, ‘ is that the rascals will be forced to keep to sea,’ thus the night passed without attempting anything, our numbers being too few to succeed against the mutineers ; but towards morning one of the men contrived to hear from a comrade above, that the wind had changed, and that the mutineers were running the vessel under a French battery ; and, in fact, shortly

after we found that they had brought the ship to an anchor.

An hour afterwards we heard a great bustle on deck, and presently a voice hailed us below, saying, in French, that we were under the guns of Fort Conquite, and that the French corvette "Columba," of sixteen guns, was alongside; whilst a detachment of soldiers was on board the "Danæ."

"The same voice then demanded, 'To whom do you surrender?' After a moments hesitation, Lord Proby said, 'To the French nation; not to mutineers. Thus we were delivered over by those mutineer scoundrels, as prisoners, we were then in company of the corvette, got under weigh, and steered for Brest. Before Lord Proby surrendered, he had thrown from the cabin window filled with lead the box containing the private signals. On arriving at Brest, we were treated as Mutineers, and all marched to Dina Prison,* on the way during the darkness of the evening, before reaching the prison, I communicated with Midshipman

Brown, and the seaman next him, a plan of escape, in which we succeeded ; and after considerable privation and some sufferings, we made the coast, and seized a small miserable fishing boat, with a sail and one oar ; we had a few biscuits, a jar of water, and that's all ; these we got out of a chase mare aground, near the boat ; her crew being up at a village, within half-a-mile of the beach. In this boat we put to sea, fully expecting, or at least hoping, to be picked up by some of our cruizers, off Brest, and the adjacent coast. But a breeze of wind blew us off the shore ; and for five days we endured a good deal of privation. We had just consumed our last buscuit, water we had none, the previous day, when we were picked up by the " Revolutionaire."

" Instead of receiving kindness, although enemies, we met with remarkably harsh treatment, and were confined below, in a miserable dark hole, and ill fed ; hearing the firing when you attacked the frigate, we managed to free ourselves, and get upon deck."

During the voyage our hero and Lieutenant Umfreville became extremely intimate; on reaching Plymouth, the Marquis de Policastri and suite proceeded to London, but Captain De Courcy and his young friend remained for a few days, their wounds being yet unhealed, rendered them unfit for much exertion.

CHAPTER X.

It may be supposed that it was not without a feeling of excitement and anxiety that Hugh De Courcy set foot upon the shores of England.

An ardent desire to learn whether Mary Wharton had reached England in safety—a voyage run in a vessel of war from the shores of the Mediterranean to Great Britain, was, during the period of the war, one of considerable peril—the chances of meeting an enemy being very great.

This intelligence he had no means of ascertaining till he reached London ; meanwhile Mr. Umfreville had written to his father and brother, and also reported himself at the Admiralty ; for in a few days, the state of the wound in his leg would enable him to bear the journey. By the return of post, he received a letter from his brother Edward. The two friends were sitting in a chamber in the Royal Hotel, Plymouth, they had just finished their breakfast, when it was brought in. Our hero still carried his left arm in a sling, but intended leaving Plymouth the following day.

"I must go directly," exclaimed Lieutenant Umfreville, pausing, in the reading of his letter.

"Nothing serious the matter, I trust?" enquired De Courcy, laying down the newspaper.

"Yes, indeed," returned the young man, "my brother has just received intelligence of my dear father having an attack of gout, he fears a very severe one ; and wishes me to

hasten to our family place, where my father is, as soon as possible. I will leave in an hour."

"I will accompany you as far as our roads lie together," said De Courcy, "and sincerely trust that this attack will pass off. I have heard from your brother, that gout is hereditary with your father, and that he suffered even when a very young man; therefore these attacks are not generally so alarming to those so afflicted as to others."

"I trust in God, that such may be the case," returned the young man, rising; "poor Edward too, was on the point of marriage with a most lovely and amiable girl, the daughter of a Sir Charles Wharton—but such is life;" and the young sailor left the room, and having his back to his friend, did not perceive that his words, had turned him into a statue of stone—so rigid, so immoveable, and so deadly pale had he become.

"Merciful God," exclaimed De Courcy, "is this then the end of all my hopes?" For several moments he remained; disappointment, agony,

and, we fear, fierce passion struggling for mastery; his hand pressed to his forehead. Nearly twenty minutes elapsed without his moving from the spot on which he stood; then taking his hand from his forehead, his features became composed and serious, somewhat paler, but retaining no longer the agonized expression of the preceding few minutes; he then passed on to his chamber to prepare for his departure for London; having previously arranged every thing requisite with respect to his ship and his prize, the "Revolutionaire."

Quitting Plymouth in a chase and four, a considerable crowd having assembled without the hotel, chiefly nautical men and sailors, for De Courcy had excited considerable admiration and curiosity at Plymouth; every attention and respect being paid him by the authorities, besides being called upon by the most influential persons in the town and neighbourhood. Hundreds had flocked on board the Neapolitan frigate, her size, the beauty of her

build, and the fight she had sustained with her powerful antagonist, had created a feeling of exceeding curiosity.

Numbers of men-of-wars' men were in the crowd assembled in the square before the hotel door, and a succession of hearty British cheers greeted our hero's appearance. De Courcy's fine figure, young and handsome features increased the enthusiasm a brave action always excites in the mind of a British tar.

Thus his kind reception and the hearty demonstration on his departure, raised the cloud from his brow; and for a time he strove to shake off the fearful depression he felt.

The friends continued their journey to Bath, together, there they separated; Mr. Umfreville proceeding into Hampshire, De Courcy to London.

The Marquis De Policastri wished him to take up his abode with him, but as he desired, while in England, to remain in as much seclusion as possible, he took private apartments for himself in St. James's street.

The cruel disappointment he experienced respecting Mary Wharton, completely banished every other thought or feeling; though he found it quite impossible to seclude himself as much as he proposed.

He had to undergo a presentation at court, and then many of the nobility and gentry called and invited the young commander to their houses.

The Marquis De Policastri was a gay and amiable nobleman, and one who delighted in society; and as a most accomplished politician, and the mission he was intrusted with being a most important one—he was taken great notice of by the court and the ministers in power.

At this period commenced the Northern confederacy against England. Russia, though the ally of England, took offence at the attack made by British ships upon the Danish frigate, "Frerja." Paul, the Russian Czar, shewed his displeasure by sequestering all British property in his dominions. The capture of Malta

increased the Czar's anger. Then Sweden and Prussia assumed a menacing attitude, therefore, what with this confederacy and her war with France, England had quite enough on her hands.

As the purport of the Neapolitan Envoy's mission to England has nothing to do with our story, we shall merely say, that the English government most willingly acceded to the request of his Majesty of the Two Sicilies ; and in less than a month, the Marquis De Policastri expected to sail from Plymouth, in the "Serene," on his return to Naples.

About this time De Courcy received a letter from his old school-fellow, then become Lord Umfreville, announcing his father's death. "I wish much to see you, Hugh," said his lordship, in his letter, "for during my father's last moments, when his recollection was perfectly restored—it lasted, alas ! for a very short time ; amongst other expressions he made use of the following remarkable words : ' I wish you, my beloved Edward, to communicate with Sir John

Acton, Prime Minister of Ferdinand of Naples—and also with your old school companion at the college of Sienna,—here he paused from weakness, and alas! the fleeting of the spirit, for after a moment he pressed my hand, and looking with fond affection at me and my brother, who knelt beside me, he said, in low, emphatic voice, ‘Do your duty, let no consideration blind you. Adieu, my beloved children’—the next moment he was no more. I have no heart or mind to comment now on those remarkable words; but it is evident to me, that you are in some strange way, implicated in my father’s last request—however, in a week or so we shall meet, please God, till then, dear friend, farewell.

“UMFREVILLE.”

“This is very strange,” continued De Courcy, and he instantly thought of the packet of papers sealed up and given him by Sir John Acton. His first impulse was, as he had his old protector’s permission, to open and inspect the documents; but on second thought, he deter-

mined to wait till after his meeting with Lord Umfreville, or do so in his presence. He had frequently heard Miss Wharton's name mentioned in the saloons of the noblemen he visited—he heard mention of her exceeding loveliness, her grace of person, and her retiring and serious manners, her engagement to Edward Umfreville was also spoken of and commented upon.

The evening on which he received Lord Umfreville's letter, he was invited to a select musical soirée at the Countess De Ponzoni's, an Italian by birth, but married to an English gentleman of good family and very large fortune.

At this party De Courcy was introduced by the Countess to Lady Hasarel, with whom he entered into conversation. Our hero was somewhat surprised at this introduction, as the party were invited chiefly to hear the exquisite singing and playing of the then celebrated Madame ———, and a few other carefully-selected public performers.

We have stated in our previous pages that Lady Hasarel had chaperoned Miss Wharton, and that it was under her protection she had made her first appearance in English society, and that her ladyship was a woman of exceeding elegant appearance and most pleasing, fascinating manners.

At first the conversation turned upon the performance of Madame ———, and then upon music in general, of which science De Courcy himself was passionately fond. Therefore he became insensibly interested in the conversation which at first he pursued listlessly.

“With all Madame De ———’s power, flexibility, and compass of tone,” said Lady Hasarel, “I have a young friend whose voice, in my opinion, surpasses hers. I wish you could hear her; she does not mix much in society, and latterly scarcely at all; but of all the voices I ever heard, hers is the most touching and sweet. She has nearly as much power as Madame De ———, though she never exercises it; but her manner, expression,

with her exquisite tones, captivate and carry you away irresistably."

With difficulty De Courcy checked a heavy sigh, as with a very serious, if not sad expression of countenance, he asked, "Who, your Ladyship, is this dangerous syren?"

"You may truly say, syren, Count," answered Lady Hasarel. "If she exerted her powers of fascination to ensnare, but such is far from the case. She has passed great part of her young life in Italy. I wonder you have not heard, since your arrival, of my fair friend, who is the niece of Sir Charles Wharton."

De Courcy expected this name would be pronounced; and he remarked, though his voice slightly faltered, "I have heard of Miss Wharton, and that she is engaged to a very old friend of mine, Lord Umfreville."

De Courcy thought it strange that Lady Hasarel evinced no surprise at his mentioning Lord Umfreville as an old friend, but merely remarked, "Yes, Miss Wharton is engaged to the young Lord Umfreville—but now, I think

of it, Count," continued Lady Hasarel, "you were, I understand, at the bombardment of Genoa, with Lord Keith, and, no doubt, remained there some time after the surrender of the city."

"Such was the case, my lady," replied our hero, his thoughts reverting, with the rapidity of light, to that eventful period.

"So was Miss Wharton," remarked Lady Hasarel, fixing her gaze upon De Courcy's thoughtful features. "She was there the whole time; but fortunately, being under the protection of a wealthy and kind friend, escaped the miseries the less fortunate portion of the inhabitants suffered. I really must make you two acquainted; it will be interesting to you both to talk over the occurrences of that certainly eventful period."

De Courcy would not for worlds meet Mary Wharton, still he could not but express himself honoured by such an introduction.

"My young friend's engagement with the present Lord Umfreville," observed Lady

Hasarel, after pausing a few moments to listen to an aria, played and sung by one of the dilittante present, took "place under rather melancholy circumstances."

"Indeed!" exclaimed De Courcy, with a start, "how so, Lady Hasarel?"

"Her uncle Sir Charles Wharton, was knocked down in the street by a carriage, and incurred congestion of the brain. His physicians gave him over, and on, as he thought, his death-bed, he implored his niece to make his last moments happy, by consenting to become the wife of the Honorable Edward Umfreville, whose father was then alive. Miss Wharton is devotedly attached to her uncle, and thinking him dying, she consented."

"My God!" he exclaimed, in a voice of such deep anguish, that two ladies, passing at the moment, started and paused; De Courcy coloured to the temples, and rose up; the ladies passed on, and Lady Hasarel, also rising, said, "I hope, Count, I shall have the pleasure of

seeing you at my house ; I assure you it will give me great pleasure."

"You are very good, my lady," returned De Courcy, "and I shall certainly avail myself of your kindness."

This conversation with Lady Hasarel, struck De Courcy as very singular, and raised in his breast many strange and conflicting thoughts ; whilst there was a predominant feeling of relief, afforded to his mind ; he now understood the whole affair clearly. Mary had sacrificed her own feelings to ensure her uncle's peace of mind, in his last moments ; then he argued that such a sacrifice was no longer needed. Sir Charles was alive and well, and why should she fulfil an engagement repugnant to the promptings of her heart. Doubt whispered in his ear—but is the engagement repugnant, is she not satisfied to let the betrothment be consummated.

Lady Hasarel must, he thought, know something of Miss Wharton's previous history ; the manner in which she commenced the conversation, and the entire absence of surprise at

his very perceptible emotion at the time, satisfied him he was right in his conjecture. Whilst passing across a room where a few elderly persons were engaged in playing whist, De Courcy beheld the Countess De Ponzoni coming from an adjoining saloon, with a young and graceful-looking girl possessing a decidedly foreign air, both in look and manner.

As they came nearer the latter raised her eyes from the carpet, and looked towards De Courcy, who beheld her with a start of intense surprise, all the blood in his body seemed to fly to his head ; for in that young girl he beheld T  rese Garetti.

With a smile of real delight and pleasure the kind-hearted Italian stepped eagerly forward, holding out her fair hand, her eyes sparkling with pleasurable emotion, whilst De Courcy took that offered hand and carried it to his lips, with a feeling of pleasure indescribable. " I see," said the Countess, with a very meaning smile, " that there is no need Count De Courcy to introduce to you my fair cousin, and

countrywoman ; I would have brought you together sooner, but T  rese is only just returned from an early party ; and now, Count, I confide her to your care till supper."

"In truth, Countess," replied the delighted sailor, "this fair lady has so completely taken me by surprise, never dreaming of so delightful a meeting, that I am like one bewildered. I almost doubted the evidence of my senses when I first saw her."

"Well, I now leave you to recover them," remarked the Countess, "no doubt you will have a great deal of say to each other ; for I assure you, T  rese has been most anxious for this meeting ;" so saying, the Countess, smilingly left them to themselves.

If you wish it, dear reader, you can be alone in a crowd, so it was, with Hugh De Courcy and the fair Genoese.

Perfectly heedless of the various parties they passed and repassed, the musical part of the soir  e having ceased, the two young people

conversed earnestly in Tèrese's own soft liquid language.

"I cannot, Tèrese," observed our hero, "express to you my amazement in seeing you in England."

"Do you not remember," returned the Genoese maiden, "how often I have expressed a wish to set foot upon the soil where first my mother drew her breath? When Sir Charles Wharton and Mrs. Arbuthnot arrived in Genoa, to take our dear Mary home, I came with them. There, do not sigh and look so desponding," continued the lively Italian, "or else these good folks here will set us down as lovers."

"Have I not enough to make me sigh, Tèrese," enquired De Courcy, leading his companion to a seat.

"No, not at all," returned Tèrese, with a cheerful, hope-inspiring smile, "Ha, there is supper announced, let us be mere mortals for half an hour; after that, we can begin at the beginning, for I have no end of things to tell and questions to ask."

“ Which I will reply to faithfully, if you will only answer me one very short one—Have I hope ?”

“ Esperanza, should always be your motto,” replied Térese ; and then they entered the supper rooms ; De Courcy with a countenance so changed from his usual expression, that those accustomed to meet him in society at once said, “ This fair Italian has thawed the ice.”

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN our hero retired from the saloons of the Countess De Ponzoni, he entered his apartments in St. James's street a very altered man indeed.

Hope had revived in his breast, despair and its attendant pangs had fled.

From the kind-hearted Térésé he had learned all the particulars and occurrences that had taken place from the period of his departure from Genoa, to the arrival of Miss

Wharton in England, as well as her subsequent engagement to Edward Umfreville; and his beloved Mary was fully exculpated in his eyes, and become ten thousand times more loveable than ever. Still the engagement remained unbroken, owing to Lord Umfreville's death; though Mary was firmly resolved never to fulfil the contract entered into. Térésé considered that it would not be either prudent or decorous for our hero to resume his intercourse with Mary whilst in England. Sir Charles himself felt the necessity of breaking off the engagement, seeing that the mental struggle Mary endured, was undermining her constitution completely; and he also felt certain that Lord Umfreville's noble disposition would be shocked at receiving the hand of a woman, he certainly most fondly loved, without having created an interest in her heart.

Térésé explained how she came to be with the Countess De Ponzoni, who was a cousin of her father's. She was staying for a week with her, whilst Sir Charles and his niece visited

an estate the Baronet had purchased lately in Hampshire. De Courcy, on his side, gave T  rese a clear and circumstantial account of the deception practised upon him, spoke of all he had suffered from having acted with such precipitancy; and the agony he had endured when first he heard of Mary's engagement with his old college friend.

He then spoke of the conversation he had had with Lady Hasarel; "Surely," he observed, "she must have some idea of my former acquaintance with Miss Wharton?"

"To tell you the truth," replied T  rese, with a smile, "I am the cause of that very conversation. Lady Hasarel is one of the kindest of women, she chaperoned Mary and myself into the gay world of London. Mary's manners, her beauty, and accomplishments, created universal wonder and admiration—but Lady Hasarel was surprised at her reserve; her refusing to dance, and evident wish for seclusion. Her ladyship often remarked to me, 'there must be some previous attachment that

creates this strange, retiring manner in one so beautiful and so fascinating. I did not deny this; but of course refrained from giving names, till we heard of your arrival in England. I guessed at once what you would ~~suffer~~ should you hear of Mary's engagement, and hear it you surely would; and as Mary was resolved not to fulfil this contract of marriage, I felt an exceeding desire to let you know how she came to enter into such an engagement.

"So in confidence I told Lady Hasarel, who goes everywhere, and who would be sure to meet you in society, and she said, if she could get introduced to you, she would be sure to enlighten you on the subject. She had, however, no opportunity till to-night; therefore, as soon as she knew you were in the rooms, she got the Countess to introduce her to you."

So engaged were the fair Genoese and our hero with mutual communications, that they were quite unconscious that they were remarked by most persons in the

countess's saloons and it became very shortly hinted amongst the gay world, that the handsome Count de Courcy and the fair Genoese were betrothed lovers; but, as usual in those cases, this report did not reach the ears of the party interested; and indeed if it had, neither would have troubled themselves about it.

On the night that the musical soir   took place at the mansion of the Countess Ponzoni, we must request our readers to enter with us one of those large and lofty houses at the back of Leicester-square. This part of the Metropolis is by no means a respectable or reputable place of abode, even now, but fifty years ago it was worse, or fully equal to St. Giles' for the variety and vagabondism of its inhabitants.

In a large and scantily, furnished chamber of this house, at a huge, clumsy oak table, sat five individuals. In a corner of the room, shut off by a ragged, dirty curtain, from the view of those in it, on a straw mattress lay a young girl about eighteen years of age: two or three other mattresses were in another

corner of the room, covered with remarkably soiled quilts. At the lower end of the table three persons were seated, whose appearance etc., denoted them to be Italian strolling musicians—two barrel-organs stood against the wall, with a hurdy-gurdy and a chained monkey.

These men had nothing remarkable about them—they were quite similar in look, dress, and bearing to the same professional gentlemen we see now traversing our streets and distracting our ears “with horrible sounds.” They were eating their supper, which consisted of bread, onions, red herring, and bad beer.

At the upper end of the table, which was very long, sat two other individuals; this end of the table approached very near to the bed, protected from view by the tattered and dirty curtain; and as these two persons conversed earnestly, in a low voice, and in Italian, the end of the curtain was drawn gently on one side, and the light of the oil lamp burning

on the table, fell upon the very pretty features of a young girl within, who appeared, by the expression of her features, to be intently listening to the conversation of the two persons, who sat with their backs to her domicile.

These individuals were strong men, in the prime of life; further description of person is unnecessary, as both have already been described. One was Lieutenant Baracco, the other Campobello, the Lazzaroni; the latter's half-naked, but picturesque attire, was laid aside; he was very shabbily dressed, in the same common dress as the Italian organ-grinders—he looked thin, and haggard, unshaved, and savage.

We take up their conversation in the middle, for they had been conversing some time before we called our readers' attention to them.

"Then we can go back at once?" said the *ci-devant* Lazzaroni, "this life, in this cursed climate, is killing."

"Yes," returned Baracco, "we can return: the French are now masters of all Italy. But

have you so little of the Italian left in you as to leave him who has baulked our fortunes and driven us into this Babylon of a city, in the pride of his prosperity."

"What can we do?" growled the Lazzaroni; "he is out of my reach, here; for you can't use your knife with any any chance of escape. They would hang you like a dog. He has a charmed life, I'll swear to it; not even the Malochia affects him. You failed to strike him at Palermo, and struck a woman instead; he's charmed I tell you."

"Stuff and nonsense," uttered Baracco, fiercely; "you're a weak fool to believe in such mummery. The man I employed to strike him down in Palermo, at the Princess's fête, aimed at home and well—but who was to imagine that a love-sick woman would sacrifice herself to save him?"

"Then again," retorted Campobello, "how did he find out that there were fifty men entered on board his ship sworn to take his life? I tell you he has a charmed life."

"Try a pistol ball within an inch of his head, and you will find out the inefficacy of the charm that protects his life"

"Easy to talk, by St. Janarius," said the Lazzaroni. "Who's to get within an inch of his head, and have a chance of escape? I want to go back to Naples. I was a cursed fool to leave the country; but I listened to your persuasions."

"You are ungrateful," exclaimed Baracco, fiercely. "Did I not, at great personal risk, save your life, when I found out, by this De Courcy's manner, on board the "Serene," that we were discovered? Did I not give you money sufficient to effect your escape, and pay you and your daughter's passage to England?"

"I allow all that," answered the Lazzaroni; "but would it not have been better to have escaped into any part of Italy, where the French were, than into this infernal country; where one is expected to work like a dog to earn a mouthful of bread?"

"There was no time for choice," returned

Baracco ; " the English brig was on the point of sailing : an hour's delay would have placed you in the power of Acton, who would have had you executed in twenty-four hours. Our conspiracy was blown—some traitor betrayed us."

" Then why did not you," growled the Italian, " embark in the same ship, if the danger was so great?"

" Because," returned Baracco, savagely, " my love of revenge was stronger than my love of life. I had more means at hand of disguising myself than you had. You were the man they most wished to secure—for they feared your comrades. I got into a boat, dressed as a sailor, and went to Palermo with the determination of taking my enemy's life. He has balked me in everything ; superseded me ; deprived me of the King's favour—he a mere boy, and because he happened to triumph where I failed. From that time I resolved to be revenged. I might have killed him, it is true, long before, in the confusion of boarding

an enemy's ship ; but that would have been a poor revenge. I wished a deeper one than the mere loss of life. I trusted to poison his existence ; to baulk his schemes ; make him wretched—and I did so ; but another sought his life in Genoa ; I left that to chance, but he escaped that also. I remained hid in Palermo a few days, and then entered as a common sailor, on board a Sicilian bark bound for London, which was to sail in a few days. In the meantime, I heard that this minion of fortune was the accepted lover of the Princess of Sorrento. Thus, despite all my efforts, he was still fortune's favourite. Maddened by envy at his success, and my own outcast state, I resolved to have him assassinated at a fête at the Princess of Sorrento's—I need not tell you how easy it is to find a stiletto in Palermo—but again I failed ; and so desperate was the pursuit after the assassin, that I was too glad the vessel I was in sailed the following night. Whether they have secured the man I bribed to strike the blow or not I can-

not say—neither do I care. We must now, however, back to Naples; by this time King Ferdinand is driven from his kingdom, and we shall undoubtedly regain our former station. You, at the head of your brethren, may strike a blow that will place you in a position you failed to attain, owing to this same De Courcy; and all I require of you now is, to revenge us both before we leave this country. I will supply you with funds, for I have picked up a goodly sum by my skill at play.”

“All this is very well,” replied Campobello, “and I am just as anxious for revenge as you are. It was that fool of a girl of mine, who shrieked, seeing me about to strike this Englishman, with my knife, on the night of the *fetê* in Naples—and that shriek caused him to turn suddenly round, by which means he avoided the blow; but for that he would not require our assistance now to rid him of life—but how is he to be got at, that is with safety to ourselves? Let me see my way, and I am willing enough.”

"But what the deuce did this daughter of yours shriek for?" demanded Baracco. "She ought to be well accustomed to see knives drawn?"

"Well, per bacco, who can say; the girl declares she could not help it. She got frightened at seeing me run such a risk in the public streets. In my passion I struck her to the ground; however, she's useful to me. She's handsome, plays the tambourine, and dances well; and picks up enough in the streets, with one of those organ-men, to whom I hire her, to keep me alive in this horrid climate; for as to work, I would rather die than do that."

"Well, listen now, and I will inform you, how you may get at our enemy without any risk to yourself. But first, let me tell you, the vessel that will take us to Messina sails in ten days; I will arrange for you and your daughter's passage. You must not, however, remain an hour more than you can help in

Messina; get a passage to Naples at once which will be in the hands of the French long before you reach it."

"But, hark you, Signor Baracco," interrupted the Lazzaroni, "you need not take a berth for the girl; I do not intend taking her back to Naples. I'm offered a good sum for her by my comrade here, and I'll take it. She will be in my way; and she'll do well enough here."

"I think you are right. You will get rid of a burden, and also, I suspect, a spy on your actions."

"Ah, by St. Janarius, if I thought that," exclaimed Campobello, savagely, turning round and gazing earnestly at the ragged curtain, but the head was drawn in, and not a sound was to be heard, "I would cut her throat. She is no child of mine, as far as that goes; I was offered fifty ducats, by a woman, one night, in the streets of Naples, if I would take the child and rear it, it was then two years old —by St. Janarius, I thought that as good a

night's work as ever fell to my lot; it costs us nothing, Signor, you know, to rear our children. So I took the child and the fifty ducats, and never thought more of the affair. I gave her the run of the streets, and called her my daughter; but do you know, she turned out a strange girl."

"How so?" demanded Guiseppe Baracco, looking a little surprised.

"Why, you see, when the woman gave me the child, the only question I asked her, was, 'has the child a name?'

" 'Call her Magdalene, if you like,' said the female, and she walked off, quite coolly; so I called her Magdalene. As she grew up she took queer freaks in her head; avoided the other children; took to holes and corners by herself. When nine or ten years old, she got herself taught to read and write by the nuns of Santa Catarina, who take in the children of the poor, to make singers of them, if they have good voices.

"Magdalene had a first-rate voice, and was

very pretty; the nuns liked her, and taught her to sing, and to play on the organ, and to do many things; I did not find it all out for a long time, not till she was fourteen or fifteen, when they wanted her to leave me, and then I threatened to break every bone in her carcase if she ever went to the convent again."

"All this may be very true and curious," interrupted Guiseppe Baracco, "but it has nothing to do with what we have on hand?"

"Yes, but it may be of consequence to me," returned Campobello, "and I will tell you how. When Magdalene was about four years old, I made acquaintance with a sbirri, who frequently came amongst us to hunt for certain characters, to whom we often gave shelter; for you know we possess some queer hiding places in Naples. This man came one day to me, 'Antonio,' says he to me, 'did you ever meet or see a woman calling herself Magdalene Caracci amongst you.'

"The name of Magdalene struck me, so I enquired, 'What is she, a thief?'

“ ‘ Well,” replied the sbirri, ‘ you may call her a thief if you like. She stole a child some two years ago, from an English Milor, and it is known she was in Naples with the child.’

“ What the devil kind of a story are you trumping up now ?” interrupted Baracco, impatiently, “ I cannot stay here all night listening to what does not concern me ;” and rising from his seat, he added, “ I will be here to-morrow night, at eleven o’clock, and if you intend to do this job, say so ; if not, I leave you to your own resources. I will show you to-morrow night where it may be accomplished safely, and with a certainty of success. Our enemy lives in a house in St James’s street, No. 7 ; if you watch, you can see him go out every day ; but to-morrow I will make my plan clear to you.”

“ Benissimo,” answered Campobello, “ I will hear your plan to-morrow night ; but I think you might have listened patiently to what I had to say—perhaps, there is money to

be had, now I am in England, for this girl is the child stolen by Magdalene Caracci I am sure; now if I had a knowledge of the language—.”

“Per bacco, sell her, as you said, to your comrade—is not that making money by her; there take a light, and let me out of this house.”

CHAPTER XII.

HUGH DE COURCY was at breakfast the morning following the conversation related in our last chapter, held in a chamber in a house at the back of Leicester-square, between Guiseppe Baracco and Campobello, the Lazzaroni, when his attendant William, entered the room, saying in a hesitating tone, "There's a very strange girl below, sir; she insists upon seeing you, sir. I told her if she was begging I would give her something, for she is an Italian,

sir. But she began to cry ; pushed back the shilling I offered her, and declared she would not go till she had seen you."

De Courcy looked up in surprise ; " What is she like, William, and how old is she ?"

" A very young girl, sir ; eighteen or nineteen, perhaps ; she's very handsome, and dressed like a player, sir, one of the street organ singers."

" Very curious," muttered our hero, " however, show her into the parlour, and I will go down and see what she wants."

William retired ; and shortly after his master descended from the breakfast room, and opening the parlour door, entered.

Standing in the middle of the room was the young girl, with her hands clasped, and her large, dark, and certainly very beautiful eyes, fixed with eagerness in their expression on the door.

The moment she beheld De Courcy she darted forward, fell upon her knees, and shaking back the long ringlets of splendid hair, that fell over her features, she exclaimed

in Italian, " Oh, signor, signor, will you save a poor girl from ruin ? who once saved your life, and who is come to do so again."

De Courcy was amazed ; he recognized at once the beautiful face that gazed up into his, with an expression of such intense anxiety that he was greatly moved.

" Campobello's daughter, and in England," exclaimed De Courcy, raising her, and making her sit down ; " this is indeed surprising."

The Italian kept her hands over her features for several moments, sobbing audibly.

" Do not give way to such grief, my poor girl," continued our hero, kindly, " I owe you too much, not to afford you all the protection in my power. Only let me know how you came to be in England, and what I can do for you ; and how you discovered my residence."

Magdalene was greatly agitated ; she trembled violently, and grew exceedingly pale, but recovering, reassured by the kind tone

and words of De Courcy; she answered, "I fear, signor, you will think me bold and rash to intrude upon you; but, indeed, indeed," and she clasped her hands tightly together, "my purpose is to warn you against the designs of a man, calling himself Baracco, and an Italian Lazzaroni, named Campobello."

"Baracco!" repeated De Courcy, with a start of exceeding surprise, "Guiseppe Baracco in England, and your father also?"

"Oh, no, signor, thanks to the blessed Madonna, he is not my father."

"Indeed," said our hero, surprised, "how is that? but pray tell me how you came to England, and why are you in company with Guiseppe Baracco?"

"We did not come in company with him, signor," and she proceeded to relate how she and the Lazzaroni, Campobello, came in a ship to London; and how the Lazzaroni met some of his countrymen, and made her play and sing in the streets to support him, till they met

the Signor Baracco, he having also fled to England.

She then described their lodging-house, at the back of Leicester-square, and all the misery and wretchedness she had endured in being subject to the loose, brutal treatment of the Italian street-musician. "I have carried this dagger about me, Signor," continued the poor girl, trembling, as she shewed De Courcy the small poniard she kept concealed under her bodice, "and I vowed I would kill myself if any one touched me. Ah, Madonna what I have suffered! but now, thanks to the Virgin, I know I am not that savage Campobello's child; and I will work till I die to earn a livelihood free from insult."

"My poor girl," exclaimed De Courcy, greatly surprised at the manner and language of the Italian girl, so widely different from what he expected, "you shall not be exposed again to such a life; I will take care of that. Now tell me all you heard these men Campobello and Guiseppe Baracco say."

"I was lying awake, Signor," answered the girl, "fretting my heart sick at the life I was forced to lead—for I cannot speak one word of English—when the Signor Baracco came into the room, and he and Campobello sat down, out of hearing of the other men, close by the ragged curtain that hid me. I could not at first hear what they said—neither, indeed, did I care—till I heard your name mentioned, then I looked cautiously out and perceiving they had their backs to me, I listened intently. Signor Baracco was persuading Campobello to assassinate you before they left England, to return to Naples. Campobello was afraid to do so, in this country; then I heard Signor Baracco say he had tried to have you assassinated in Palermo, but that some princess was stabbed instead of you. Campobello then said he was going to sell me to the brutal organ-player to whom he hired me by the day; for that I was not his child. 'How is that?' enquired Signor Baracco. 'Why you see,' answered Campobello, 'one

night, in the streets, a woman offered me fifty ducats if I would take a child, two, or perhaps three years old, and rear it. It was too good an offer to refuse, so I took the child, and the woman gave me the fifty ducats. I asked her what the child's name was, and she said, Magdalene—,"

At that name De Courcy started ; a strange feeling of increased interest came over him ; and, with much kindness of manner, he said, " Was there no other name, my good girl, attached to Magdalene ? "

" No, Signor," replied the girl, venturing to raise her fine eyes to our hero's face with a look of surprise ; " but Campobello said, about two years after he had taken the care of me, one of the Neapolitan sbirri, who knew him, came to ask him if a woman, who stole a child from a rich Milor Inglese, in Genoa—"

" Good God ! " exclaimed De Courcy, " What is this you say ? you fill my mind with vague surmises and amazement. Occurrences flash into my memory which may turn out of most

material consequence to you. Pray tell me more of this woman who stole the child. Did you hear her name?"

"Yes, Signor;" returned the girl, greatly agitated, "Yes; the sbirri said her name was Magdalene Caracci."

"My God, how strange!" murmured De Courcy, and then he demanded, aloud, "What more?"

"Only, Signor," answered the Italian, "that Campobello said he was certain I was the child who had been stolen by Magdalene Caracci."

De Courcy was bewildered—if such were the case, the poor, ill-used, cruelly-treated girl before him was the daughter of Sir Charles Wharton.

"My poor child," he observed, "what you tell me fills my mind with the most profound astonishment; that woman, Magdalene Caracci, has been sought after for years, by a gentleman I know, who lost his only daughter in the way you say. Be this as it may, you shall never want a protector. The Almighty, in a strange

way, inexplicable to us, has perhaps given a clue to a mystery long sought to be cleared up. I must secure the person of Campobello ; but first, I will place you under the care of a most kind person, the mistress of this house. She is a widow, and has two daughters."

"But Signor, recollect," interrupted the girl, anxiously, "recollect your life will be attempted. Oh, Madonna! if—"

"Nay, Magdalene, I trouble little about the machinations of two Italians in such a country as this. What you have just told me is of vital importance, not only to yourself, but to me also. I will not lose one moment. Stay you here, whilst I go and speak with Mrs. Mason."

Magdalene, with the tears flowing from her eyes, caught his hand, and, despite his efforts, pressed it passionately to her lips, and then sat down, hiding her face.

The young man, in his heart, pitied the poor deserted girl, and blessed that Providence which had caused her to overhear the despic-

ble villain who so wantonly desired to barter away both body and soul.

With the kindness and affection of a brother, for he almost felt satisfied she was either the lost child or niece of Sir Charles Wharton, our hero soothed the wounded spirit of the excited Magdalene, and leaving her more calm and reassured, left the room, and, proceeding along the hall, tapped at the door of the back parlour.

On being told to come in, he turned the handle and entered. His landlady, Mrs. Mason, and her youngest daughter, were taking breakfast; they jumped up, with a look of surprise, anxious to know what their handsome and distinguished lodger could require, at that rather early hour.

"Pray do not disturb yourself, Mrs. Mason," said the young man, "pray both of you sit down, and allow me to sit also," he added, taking a chair himself, "I have a favour to request of you, Mrs. Mason, which, if you grant, will greatly oblige me."

"Anything I can do, Captain De Courcy, to oblige," replied Mrs. Mason, eagerly, "you may depend on my doing."

"Thank you, Mrs. Mason," returned our hero, "I felt sure you would."

"There is a young girl, an Italian," pursued De Courcy, "concerning whose safety and welfare I am exceedingly anxious. I cannot explain circumstances at present to your satisfaction; all I can say is, that I believe her to be the child of an English gentleman of fortune, stolen in her infancy; but, till I can learn more, it is my intention to place her under the care of Sir Charles Wharton and his daughter."

Mrs. Mason's serious countenance changed at once, and she immediately said, "Dear me, how very strange, Count, but I shall be most happy to take charge of her, where is the young lady?"

"She is in your front parlour, Mrs. Mason; but, you must not be surprised, at seeing her dressed in a somewhat theatrical style, in fact,

the unfortunate girl has been forced to earn her existence as a street dancer or tambourine player."

"Dear me," exclaimed both mother and daughter, looking at each other; but as Mrs. Mason was in reality an excellent and very respectable woman—and having the most profound respect for a lodger who paid her six guineas a-week for her house, and who was visited by the nobility, she at once added, "I have the utmost reliance on your word, Count De Courcy; therefore you may depend I will shew this poor girl every kindness."

"I feel obliged, Mrs. Mason, by you acceding to my request; it will only be for a few days; till Sir Charles Wharton returns to town. She must on no account go outside the house, or she may again be entrapped."

Taking out his purse, he put a ten-pound note on the table, requesting Mrs. Mason to purchase a few articles of proper attire becoming a young lady.

"The worst of it is," said our hero, "she does not speak one word of English."

"That is awkward, Count," observed Mrs. Mason; "but your attendant, Mr. Atkins, speaks Italian."

"True, William can do so after a fashion;" replied the gentleman, "quite enough, at all events, for a few days."

Mrs. Mason then accompanied her lodger to the parlour. Poor Magdalene rose up, her cheeks crimson with shame; and as she looked at her short dress and tawdry attire, her eyes filled with tears as they met the surprised glance of Mrs. Mason, who exclaimed,—

"Bless me, what a beautiful girl; but what a dress—poor thing."

Then taking her by the hand, she addressed to her many kind words; but which, of course, were unintelligible to Magdalene. De Courcy, however, repeated them to her; and the look and manner of Mrs. Mason reassured the young girl, who, after a few words with our hero, begging him to be on his

guard, for his two enemies would surely watch for an opportunity to injure him, she followed our hero's landlady into her own part of the house.

De Courcy then returned to his own room, and throwing himself into a chair, began to reflect on this strange and unexpected meeting with Magdalene, and to devise the manner in which he should communicate with Sir Charles Wharton. All of a sudden he recollected T rese Garetti, who was at Lady Hasarel's, and jumping up, he rang the bell, and on William making his appearance, he desired him to pay every attention to the Italian girl left under Mrs. Mason's care, and to notice, also, with particular attention, any street musicians, Italians, should he see any come about the house, and keep a keen eye upon them.

William promised to observe, with the strictest attention, his master's request, and left the room, his mind filled with an intense curiosity concerning the Italian girl thus strangely introduced into the house, and about whom his master was so particular.

CHAPTER XIII.

FINISHING his toilet, Hugh De Courcy took his hat, left his lodgings, and proceeded up St. James's-street. As he came out, a man, having the features and manner of a foreigner, who was standing under a doorway on the opposite side of the street, came forward and looked keenly up the street after our hero, muttering some words to himself, with a very savage expression of countenance.

This man, in years about four or five and

thirty, had a remarkably repulsive countenance, was about the middle height, strongly built, and shabbily dressed.

Casting a look over at the handsome house De Courcy had left, he walked up the street into Piccadilly, and then, proceeding at a rapid pace, turned down Oxenden-street; and approached another Italian, with a barrel-organ, having a number of little figures, dancing to a most irregular tune, on its front, and holding a long string, to the end of which was attached a monkey, who, with wonderful agility, climbed up the spouts to the windows, with a little can in his paw, soliciting a few coppers for his master.

The man came up to the organ-grinder, who, however, kept turning away at his instrument with increased vigour. "I've tracked the girl," said he to his comrade. "Campobello was right; she has overheard what he and that comrade of his were saying last night, for she has got into No. 7, St. James's-street. Curse the slut," he added, savagely, "if I have

to set the house on fire I will have her out of it—,”

“Don’t be rash, Giacomo, don’t be rash,” returned the owner of the monkey, who just then descended from a drawing-room window, with the sum of three-halfpence in his tin can.

“You are not in Italy, amico, recollect that ; go to Campobello, at the corner of Oxford-street, he is waiting for you ; but don’t be rash, we’ll nab her yet. She’s worth the money you agreed to give for her. *Una Bella ragazza, senza dubia,*” and, changing the tune, he ground away at *Partant pour la Syria*.

The man called Giacomo ground his teeth, instead of an organ, with rage, and continued his way to Oxford-street. Under an archway, within a few doors of the corner, stood the *Lazzaroni*, Campobello. This man, who was, a month or two back, so strong, powerful, and audacious—proud of his rule over more than five thousand of his brethren, who, at his beck, were ready to commit the most fearful excesses; accustomed from childhood to bask in the sun,

or lie lazily in the shade, the “*Dolce fa niente*” of a Lazzaroni’s life, roused into life only on holydays and festàs, and then only to decorate his scanty attire with a few gaudy ribbons, saunter through the gay Toledo, and gratify his appetite, and that of his female companion, with bread and jam, over which stewed snails were spread, that delectable mess washed down with *aqua gelata*, and then, when fatigued, stretch himself beneath a colonnade or portico of a palace, or the sheltered side of a church wall—and thus, through life, from the cradle to the grave—this man, Campobello, was now gaunt, and thin, and bony; his attire, never intended for him, fitted him badly; his face was unshaven; and his long lank, black hair was hanging down on his shoulders. There was a look of savage misery about the man very remarkable.

Jacomo, the Italian, who was to purchase Magdalene, walked up to Campobello, and both retired deeper into the lane.

"Well, have you tracked the —— girl?" enquired the Lazzaroni, with a fierce oath.

"Yes," returned Giacomo, "I tracked her. I was afraid to seize her in the street in broad day, but I stuck close to her heels. She went right to No. 7, St James's-street—and there she staid. I saw that tall, handsome man, you call the Count De Courcy, afterwards come out from the house; but no signs of the girl."

"Curse him, what can he keep the girl for?" cried Campobello. "I'll fire the house this night, and have her out."

"So I said," remarked Giacomo, "but Manzani laughed at me."

"Let him laugh," fiercely returned Campobello, "he's a coward. We will fire the house to-night, and in the confusion seize upon her, or stop that meddling, cursed Englishman. She's a handsome girl, perhaps he's struck with her."

"Then he shall know the length of my knife," interrupted Giacomo, with a frightful

grimace, "but how is it possible to fire such a house as that, and in such a street?"

"Easy enough," replied Campobello, "if you have but the spirit to attempt it; the streets are poorly lighted*, only a few old, lazy, sleepy watchmen guard the houses during the night. I'll try it, if I burn the whole street; ah, if I could burn the whole city, they are heretics, it would be a good job."

Jacomo grinned savagely, he was desperately enamoured of Magdalene, and thought if left with him, and her supposed father gone out of the country, he could force the wretched girl to be worse than his slave.

All the fierce passions of the Italian were roused; knowing nothing of De Courcy or of Magdalene, he at once supposed that the intentions of our hero in detaining her were evil.

"But how is it possible," he enquired, "to set a house on fire without getting into it?"

"Easy enough," answered Campobello, whom misery and savage revenge made reckless

No gas at this period.

of life ; " bore a hole with a large gimlet in the street door, put a thin tin tube through it, pour a subtil spirit I know, of, through the tube, and then set fire to it, by a long thin lighted wax cord."

" But the spirit will run over the hall," said Jacomo.

" So much the better ; the more it spreads the greater the chance of the house catching fire ; it's sure to form a pool somewhere ; besides, I have tried the plan before now—it won't fail."

" It will take time to bore the hole," observed Jacomo, " and the watchman,—"

" Tut, man, one will watch ; such projects much depend on luck ; the hour must be a late one. It will be a glorious revenge."

" Where is your comrade of last night ?" asked Jacomo, who, as he began to cool, also began to get frightened, and to reflect how, if it was possible to escape detection after such a crime,

he could ever detain the girl, who would be sure to betray him.

"You are hesitating," said Campobello, with a look of scorn and savage ferocity.

"Why, you see, you who intend to fly the country in a day or two,—"

"There, that's enough," fiercely interrupted the Lazzaroni, "I will not league with a cowardly fool like you. Curse the girl, let her take her chance," and without another word he walked out of the lane.

He had scarcely got into the street when two police officers seized him by the collar, saying, "You are an Italian; no resistance; you are our prisoner." Campobello was livid with rage.

"There's another rascal down the lane," said William Atkins, the Count de Courcy's attendant, "I saw two of them go into the court."

A handcuff was in two minutes slipped over Campobello's wrists; a crowd, as usual, had collected; and two more police officers came

up, and then the first ran down the lane and captured Jacomo, who had no means of retreat, and who was too cowardly to attempt a rush through the crowd.

The Italians were conveyed to Bow-street, and locked up, till the appearance of the Count de Courcy; awaiting which, we will account to our readers for the sudden capture of the Italians.

William Atkins, the personal attendant of the Count de Courcy, was an extremely shrewd, clever valet, and one who had his wits about him. Well aware, that whilst residing in Naples, his master's life had been attempted on the night of the fête by the Lazzaroni Campobello, whose person was well known to him; and having his curiosity greatly raised by the appearance of Magdalene, and his master's great interest in her, as well as the precise instructions he had received, he resolved to keep a keen eye upon any Italian musician loitering about the street near the house; at once setting it down in his own mind that some

fresh attempt was about to be made on the count's life.

William was looking out of the window, as his master left the house, and his quick glance detected the figure of the man opposite gazing after him.

"That's an Italian," muttered William, "I'll watch that fellow," so bolting down stairs, he siezed his hat, and was rushing out when Mrs. Mason called from the parlour door, "Mr. Atkins, please come here one moment."

William, with his head full of the Italian, fancied himself in Italy, so he answered hastily, "Saluto, saluto, signora," and off he bolted.

"Bless me," said Mrs. Mason, to her daughter, "what's that he said? he has gone off like a madman."

William, on getting into the street, caught sight of the Italian going towards Piccadilly, and followed him; the man turned to the right, and William was about to turn also, when he perceived his master at the corner of the Bath Hotel, talking to a police officer; he

ran to him, and told him that he was following a very suspicious-looking Italian, who had been evidently watching the house in St. James's-street.

"Then do you go with my attendant," said De Courcy, addressing the police officer, "and see where the fellow goes; you may thus stumble on this Campobello."

"Very good, sir," replied the police officer, who was in plain clothes.

"Try and regain sight of the Italian; never mind me. I will keep you in sight," said the police man addressing William.

"By jove, I'm afraid I have lost him," cried William, hastening along Piccadilly. But just as he came up to Oxenden-street, he heard the grinding of the organ, and looking down the street, he perceived the very man he had lost, talking to the man with the organ and the monkey; presently the same man came up the street again, and proceeded, as the reader knows, towards Oxford-street. William easily

kept him in sight, till he came to the arch-way, where stood Campobello.

One look into the remarkable countenance of Campobello was sufficient for William, he remembered him on the instant; and he gazed eagerly round for the policeman. On the opposite side of the street he beheld him with another, also in plain clothes; at a sign, they at once crossed over, and the policeman said, "All right; they are in a net, they cannot escape;" and thus they were both captured.

In the meantime, De Courcy, had stopped on his way to Lady Hasarel's, to speak to the police officer he had met, and explain to him his wish to secure the person of the Italian Campobello, who lodged in a certain house at the back of Leicester-square.

"I know the house, sir," said the police officer, "Italian street-musicians lodge there."

Our hero was just describing the person of Campobello when his valet William came up.

After the departure of the police officer, De Courcy proceeded to Belgrave-square, and

knocking at Lady Hasarel's, was at once shewn by the servant into the drawing-room, where he was immediately joined by T  rese Garetti.

The truly, kind-hearted Italian was rejoiced to see him; "I gave orders," she observed, "in case you called, that you should be shown up stairs, for her ladyship is gone to Windsor, but will be back to-morrow; I was wishing to see you, to tell you that Sir Charles Wharton and your ladye love arrived late last night, and that I go home—I call being with Mary, home—to-morrow."

"I am rejoiced T  rese," observed De Courcy, who felt the affection of, and was received by the fair Genoese, as a brother. "I am rejoiced at Sir Charles's arrival, for a most singular and extraordinary circumstance occurred this morning, which will require my immediate communication with him."

"Good gracious;" exclaimed T  rese, with some anxiety, though she readily surmised, by our hero's countenance, that nothing serious or of evil importance had occurred.

De Courcy at once explained what had happened, and his great desire to let Sir Charles Wharton know all about it, in case they succeeded in securing the person of Campobello.

"What an extraordinary occurrence;" cried T  rese, "the unfortunate girl, poor soul, what she must have suffered. If you will accompany me, I will go at once and bring her here. She must be the baronet's niece or daughter; what a perplexing mystery."

"I think, till we communicate with Sir Charles," returned our hero, pleased to see so much kindness of heart and carelessness of the strict rules of English society in T  rese's words and manners, so very different from that to which she was accustomed, "we had better leave Magdalene with my good-natured landlady. Mrs. Mason."

"Well, on second thoughts, I also think so; then our best plan will be to write to Sir Charles a short note, and appoint a meeting at your residence."

After a moment's consideration, De Courcy agreed to this method of introduction.

So T  rese sat down and wrote the note, briefly stating particulars, and requesting Sir Charles to send back word by the messenger, what hour would be convenient to him to meet Captain De Courcy.

A domestic was then summoned, and the letter despatched.

"Now, do tell me, Captain De Courcy," exclaimed T  rese, "for I am, as you may well suppose, dying with curiosity, what kind of girl this poor Magdalene is? for whether or not she turns out niece or daughter of Sir Charles Wharton, she must be taken care off, and not be forced again into the frightful position from which she is now, thank goodness, snatched."

"You are a kind, generous girl," replied De Courcy, warmly, "and I trust, when you surrender that good heart into the keeping of some happy lover, he may, as assuredly he will, appreciate the treasure he will get."

Térese laughed gaily, saying, as she shook her head, "Do you want me, Count, to make myself miserable? I am quite heart-whole now—free as air; and really, to judge by the effect the little god Cupid has had upon some very intimate friends of mine, I should prefer dying an old maid."

A domestic here entered the room, to inform our hero that his attendant, Mr. Atkins, wished particularly to see him.

"Oh let him come up," entreated Térese; "I know he must have something to tell you about those Italian musicians."

William soon made his appearance. "I see by your countenance, William, that you have been successful in some measure," said De Courcy.

"Yes sir," replied the valet, with a very self-satisfied look; "we have laid hands on the very man you wished to secure: we have the Lazzaroni, Campobello, in custody."

"You are a clever fellow, William," observed

De Courcy, highly pleased. "What have you done with him?"

"Lodged him comfortably, sir, with his comrade, in Bow-street. You will have to go there, sir, before three o'clock—so the police-officer bade me inform you."

Just then a carriage drew up to the door, and a loud aristocratic summons announced a visitor of importance. Térése, casting a glance out of the window, exclaimed, "Ah, this is the Baronet's carriage; he is come himself. I thought he would."

De Courcy felt a slight degree of agitation at the prospect of meeting with his beloved Mary's uncle; but there was little time for thought, for the door opened and Sir Charles Wharton entered the room, with a hasty step and a somewhat eager, agitated manner; without any hesitation, and with a warmth and vivacity highly gratifying to our hero, he held out his hand, saying, "I need no introduction to Count De Courcy; and believe me," continued

the Baronet, "I take your hand with the feelings and affection of a father."

De Courcy's cheek flushed with excitement and pleasure as he warmly returned the pressure of the Baronet's hand, saying, he felt more than he could express at the kindness of Sir Charles, whom he could not meet as a stranger, for he had long looked forward to the period of their acquaintance with exceeding pleasure.

"My fair friend, here," said Sir Charles, taking T rese's hand and kissing it with all the gallantry of the old school, "will, I know, excuse our forgetfulness of her presence; but now let me, I pray you, hear more fully of this strange meeting with, perhaps, my long lost daughter or niece, and what steps you think we ought to take in this affair. Mary is warmly interested, and anxious beyond measure."

At the name of Mary, De Courcy felt an emotion of exceeding pleasure. Sir Charles spoke with so much warmth, and in so affec-

tionate a tone, that it removed from our hero's mind any cause of restraint or reserve in his conversation with the Baronet.

He talked to him as if he had known him for months; and the Baronet himself, strongly prepossessed in his favour, and struck with his fine noble figure and handsome features, already felt proud of his beloved Mary's choice.

"Our best plan," observed our hero, after some further explanations respecting Campobello and his own meeting with Magdalene, which put the Baronet more au fait to the matter in hand—

"Our best plan will be to work on the fears of this ruffian Campobello. I have, in reality, no charge against either of those men now in custody, without bringing forward Magdalene and making things public. His attempting my life in a foreign country can only be dealt with in the place where the act was attempted. Therefore I will threaten him by avowing my intention of conveying him on board my ship, on a charge of murder, and taking him to

Naples, where he is sure to be tried and executed as a conspirator; but that, if he is willing to declare all he knows about Magdalene, and tell the truth, he and his comrade shall be set free, and Campobello himself receive a sum of money to enable him live or seek an employment."

"I agree with you," returned Sir Charles; "that is our only plan of proceeding. Sir William ———, the chief magistrate at the Bow-street office, is my particular friend, and he, I am confident, will aid our views. It is now two o'clock, so let us proceed at once to Bow-street."

Taking leave of T  rese, the Baronet promising that he would take upon himself at once the care of Magdalene, no matter whether the result of their interview with Campobello was satisfactory or not; as there would always remain in his mind a conviction, that this poor deserted girl was the missing child of his brother. The child whose fate he had felt such anxiety about, and had so vainly sought."

Entering the baronet's carriage they drove at once to Bow-street. On the way, Sir Charles remarked, "I am quite aware, Count De Courcy, of your affection for my dear child or niece, as the case may be; of the mutual agreement between you when in Genoa, and of the strange way in which your engagement was broken off.

"Nay, my dear sir," continued the baronet, kindly, and laying his hand affectionately on that of our hero's, seeing that he was about to offer some explanation, "we will drop the past now, and let us talk only of the future. You are aware how my poor Mary, to render my last moments easy—for recollect, I could not know that you and Mary would ever meet again—to render my mind easy, she sacrificed her feelings, and permitted herself to be contracted in marriage to the present Lord Umfreville.

"This contract still exists in name; for the sudden demise of the late Lord, interrupted for the time, all intercourse between Mary and her intended husband. Lord Umfreville is a

nobleman of the highest honour and integrity; he will, and does admit that Mary was always averse, or even, pained by his attention, and that she continually and most scrupulously avoided receiving the marked assiduities of any gentleman.

“Still you will admit that, for Mary’s sake, who feels acutely her painful situation, no public or marked intercourse should take place between you in England, so as to attract observation and lead to remarks.

“It is supposed, amongst our friends and acquaintances that Mary is to give her hand to Lord Umfreville; and, strange to say, it is the talk of the fashionable world, that you on your return to Italy are to be united to the Princess of Sorento, who is allied to the Royal family of Naples.”

“My dear sir,” interrupted De Courcy, with his cheeks flushed, and considerably excited, “you may believe me, such is not the case; by a strange coincidence in the history of Mary and myself, I was nearly, from accidental

circumstances, and a misunderstanding of King Ferdinand, actually from gratitude—for the Princess saved my life, risking her own at the same time—about to offer her my hand.

“The Princess was aware, however, of my devoted affection for Miss Wharton ; and in an interview I had with her the day before my departure for England, she released me from all obligation in fulfilling the King’s wishes ; stating at the same time, with a noble generosity, that she could not think of accepting the hand of a man whose heart was devoted to another.”

“How very extraordinary” said Sir Charles, musingly, “your destinies seem so strangely similar ; but how could this report have gone abroad of your intended marriage with the Princess ?—not that dear Mary ever bestowed a thought upon the subject—she gave no credit to it.”

“She has a noble, generous, confiding heart,” replied De Courcy, with deep emotion,

“and if I am permitted ever to call her mine, a life’s devotion will but feebly repay her confiding love and atone for my unworthiness—.”

“No, Hugh, no,” said the Baronet, most affectionately, “you see I am becoming fatherly in my address; do not wrong yourself. You were hasty, but—. Ah, here we are,” the carriage stopped, and the conversation ceased.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN a strong room in the police-office, in Bow-street, were locked up, Campobello, the Lazzaroni, and Jacomo Lorodi, the organ grinder. They were not handcuffed, for there was no fear of their effecting an escape out of the place in which they were confined.

"I wish I had cut that girl's throat seven years ago," said Campobello, savagely, as he paced the narrow limits of his cell, "here's a cursed mess she has got us into."

"You into," retorted Giacomo, spitefully, "you may say. By St. Nicholas, I can't see what charge they can have against me. I offered to buy the girl of you, and corpo de Juda, what's that to any one? I earn my bread honestly."

"Oh very," returned the Lazzaroni, with an oath, "perhaps, passing bad coin is termed an honest employment in this country."

Jacomo looked savage, as he said, "That's all the thanks I get for shewing you the way to earn a few shillings without work. You will peach upon me, I suppose; if you do, I'll swear you proposed to fire St. James's-street."

"Villain! who proposed it first?" exclaimed Campobello, in a rage, catching his comrade by the throat; the organ-grinder cried out "murder," for Campobello was a powerful and reckless villain; the door was unlocked and in ran two policemen.

„Well you are a nice pair," said one of the policemen, "measuring each other's throats. Are you afraid our hemp collars won't fit your

Italian necks. Come, we must handcuff you if there's any more of this row."

Campobello did not understand a word of the polite speech of the policeman; Giacomo did, he was now excited, and cried, fiercely, in his broken English,

"What for I keep here? what I do, lock up with this man to murder me?"

"Oh, don't be alarmed," replied the policeman, "console yourself, if he does murder you, he'll swing for it.

"But come you with me," added the policeman, to Giacomo, "there's a gentleman wants to speak with your tall comrade. You can go about your business if you like, we don't want you."

"What for you take me then like a thief? I no stole nothing; I'll have de compensation," said Giacomo, getting on the high horse.

"Oh, you will, will you?" exclaimed the policeman, with a very ominous laugh; "blow me if that ain't a swell, and, whispering a few words in the Italian's ear, a greenish hue

coloured his skin, pale he could not turn, but he looked quite cooled, and slunk after the laughing policeman like a cur.

He had hardly departed before Hugh De Courcy entered the cell, and the policeman closed the door, leaving our hero and the surprised Campobello together.

The very first thought of the Lazzaroni was to rush upon De Courcy and choke him. A second look at the powerful, graceful, and healthy man before him, satisfied him that he would be a child in his grasp. So leaning against the wall with his arms folded across his breast, and his bushy, wild eyebrows bent in a dark frown, he waited till the man he now noted with the ferocity of a wild beast should speak to him.

De Courcy looked calmly at the Lazzaroni for several moments without uttering a word; his tall, gaunt form was greatly reduced, he was almost emaciated; his colour cadaverous; he was killing himself with his savage, furious

and blood-thirsty thoughts and reflections; they left him no rest by day or night.

"I am come here," said Hugh de Courcy, breaking the silence, "not for the purpose of punishing you for your dastardly attempt upon my life in Naples, nor for your scheme, concocted with that mad man Baracco, of again attempting to assassinate me. I care nothing about your plans and projects so long as they are confined to myself. I will forgive you all, restore you to freedom, and provide you with sufficient means to maintain yourself till you find employment."

"And do you think I'll work?" interrupted the Lazzaroni, with a savage, hoarse laugh.

"That's as you please," returned De Courcy, calmly, "I shall not require your services. The question now is, whether you prefer being taken to Naples on board a man-of-war, to be tried by the laws of your country as a traitor and assassin—or to answer me, on your oath, the few questions, I shall ask you concerning

the poor girl, Magdalene, whom you have acknowledged not to be your child."

"Maladetta, cursed be her name," said the ruffian, in a burst of passion, "do your worst; I defy you. Sooner than gratify you in any one thing you desire, I would undergo the worst torture the imbecile Ferdinand could inflict. You have my answer, so spare your trouble, and let me breathe, for I choke in the same atmosphere with you."

"You are a miserable villain," returned De Courcy, "without one particle of human feeling in your wretched carcase; you have chosen your own doom, so let it be. I do not believe it is in your power to enlighten me on the subject I require, therefore I leave you to the bitterness of your own thoughts and reflections."

"Curse you," muttered the hardened wretch, stamping with fury on the floor, "oh, that I had my former strength, but even now," he added, working himself into a frenzy of passion, "I will strangle you or die," and with a

sudden spring, he threw himself upon De Courcy, encircling him with his long arms, and like a maniac, endeavouring to use his teeth. Disgusted and incensed, Hugh De Courcy grasped the wretch by the throat, tore him from his hold, and exerting his whole strength, hurled him back upon the floor with such force that he lay stunned.

The noise brought two of the police officers into the room, startled when they beheld our hero, with his face flushed with excitement, his coat torn from his arm, and Campobello lying stunned upon the floor.

"Good God, sir, has the villain assaulted you?"

"He was mad enough to do so," replied our hero, "and in self-defence I was forced to be rough with him."

The policeman lifted the man up just as he was opening his eyes, when De Courcy left the room, and proceeded to the private chamber where he had left the baronet, with Sir William ———.

“ Good gracious !” exclaimed Sir Charles, “ what has happened, Count, has the villain attempted to assault you ? Your coat is torn.”

“ He is a hardened wretch,” answered our hero, “ and it is quite impossible to get one word of information from him. Neither threats nor promises have the slightest effect upon him. I suppose, Sir William ———,” he continued, “ it will be necessary to procure an order from the Neapolitan Ambassador, for the transporting of this felon on board my ship. I will take him to Naples, and hand him over to the government ; he is a man that ought not to be let loose amongst his fellow men.”

“ As a foreigner, Count de Courcy, you will have to do as you say. I will take care he is carefully watched till you order his removal, he must be a most confirmed ruffian.”

After some further unimportant conversation, the baronet and our hero took their leave of Sir William ———, thanking him for his courtesy and attention.

“ This is a disappointment, Hugh,” observed

Sir Charles, as soon as the carriage drove off ; the Coachman being desired to proceed to No. 7, St. James's-street.

"In some respects it is, Sir Charles," returned De Courcy, "still I do not think the villain knows much more than Magdalene overheard."

"What kind of girl is the poor thing, reared as she has been?"

"She speaks remarkably well and with great propriety," answered De Courcy, "in fact her language and manner surprised me. My lady remarked she was very handsome, though rather dark complexioned, a brunette, but that may arise from her constant exposure in a warm climate ; her eyes are beautiful, and reminded me forcibly of Miss Wharton."

The Baronet sighed, "I wish to God, Hugh, that I was relieved from this distressing mystery respecting this girl and my darling Mary ; at all events, I must take Magdalene home with me ; Mary is most anxious that she should be left under her care ; she is very

sanguine about their relationship. I feel myself a most pressing desire to see the poor girl."

"I think, Sir Charles, you will be even more surprised than you expect."

"But what do you intend to do respecting this Signor Baracco, who appears to me a much more dangerous man to have for an enemy than that Lazzaroni Campobello?"

"Not in such a country as England," was De Courcy's reply, "his machinations and schemes, and vows of vengeance, are not worth attending to."

"Do not be so confiding in our laws and in our regulations as to individual safety in this great over-grown metropolis," said the baronet; "for gold you can procure the services of as bad a class of villains as in any other city in Europe; and I am quite convinced as great crimes are committed in London as in any city on the continent—therefore, I pray you, be on your guard, and be not too confiding."

The carriage drew up at De Courcy's residence, and both gentlemen entered the

house, and proceeded to our hero's drawing room. The latter desiring his valet to give his compliments to Mrs. Mason, and if not disturbing her, he would wish to see her, and the young girl entrusted to her care.

William soon returned with the information, "that Mrs. Mason was in the front parlour with the young person he mentioned."

William looked so mystified that both his master and Sir Charles observed it.

"You look bewildered, William," said the former, "what has astonished you?"

"Lord, sir, you will be quite as astonished as I am, when you see the young—." William seemed puzzled for a time, which, his master perceiving, said, with a smile,

"Why what has happened to the young girl, that so surprises you, William?"

"Why, sir, she's as fair as a lily, and this morning she was quite brown; and besides, Mrs. Mason has dressed her in her daughter's best garments, and for the life of me, sir, I can't believe it's the same person, except for the eyes."

Sir Charles looked at De Courcy, remarking, with considerable emotion, "We are right in our conjectures, let us go down."

"My dear Sir Charles, let me go first and speak to her, the presence of a stranger, under the circumstances, might embarrass and unnerve her, for she is excitable to a degree."

"I think you are right, Hugh, I am just as excitable myself. So do you go, and explain things to her, but not before Mrs. Mason; let us keep this matter for a while to ourselves; let her think you have procured in me a protector for the poor girl, in the hopes of finding out who she really is."

"I will do so, Sir Charles, it is decidedly the best plan," so saying, Hugh de Courcy descended to the parlour.

On throwing open the door and advancing into the room, our hero stood positively bewildered, unable to believe the evidence of his sight. Mrs. Mason rose from the sofa on which she was sitting, beside Magdalene, the poor girl herself made an effort to rise, but

quite overpowered by her feelings, which seemed completely to master her, she sank back on the sofa and burst into tears.

That Hugh De Courcy should be surprised was no wonder. It was not possible for any human being to recognize in the fair and beautiful girl, apparelled so neatly and handsomely, with her luxuriant dark hair dressed and arranged after the mode of the English maidens, --the dingy, tawdry, theatrically-attired girl, with hair gathered behind, uncombed and neglected —there was nothing left but the large, liquid, dark eyes to recall the Lazzaroni girl, Magdalene. But that which struck De Courcy with the astonishment he evinced, was the striking likeness of Magdalene to Mary Wharton, it was impossible not to see it; it was too evident, in features, eyes, look; for the instant, De Courcy could almost have vowed he beheld his own Mary.

"You are astonished, Count," said Mrs. Mason, looking quite pleased at her own handy work, "I am amazed myself; the poor girl's

skin was stained, and it's not half off yet. Oh, I am quite sure, she was stolen from some high family, though I cannot understand a word she says, but she is so loving and so grateful, I have taken quite a fancy to her."

"In truth, I am astonished, Mrs. Mason," said our hero, sitting down beside Magdalene, who made an effort to rise to her feet, blushing and trembling with excitement at her novel situation; but De Courcy took her hand and gently reseated her, speaking to her in her own language, entreating her not to be so agitated and excitable, "for," continued De Courcy, "I have procured for you a kind, generous and noble protector, in whose beautiful daughter you will find a sister."

The hand De Courcy held trembled like an aspen leaf.

Mrs. Mason very judiciously left the room; she certainly could not understand what the young couple were saying, therefore she felt herself "de trop."

"Ah, Signor," cried Magdalene, "how can I

ever show my gratitude to you for releasing me from a life of degradation—to which I submitted, solely because I thought it my duty to support a father ; and God, help me ; not speaking a word of the language, frightened by threats and ill-usage, I did that which was killing me, seeing no way of escaping."

"My poor girl," said De Courcy, "you have suffered much indeed, but all that is now over—and it is quite possible you may yet be restored to your natural guardians. In Sir Charles Wharton, who now undertakes to protect you, you may find a relative."

Magdalene started, and clasping her hands, exclaimed, "Ah, Madonna, can that blessing be possible?" and snatching up De Courcy's hand, she kissed it, and covered it with her tears.

"You must conquer this emotion, Magdalene," observed our hero, affectionately, "you surprise me altogether; where have you learned the language you use, and your manner?"

Magdalene's cheeks were crimson. "An-

other time, I will tell you everything, signor ; but do not think, I pray you, that all my time was passed in the streets of Naples. Ah, no, the Madonna raised up to me a protector even there, and saved both soul and body ;" the girl raised her eyes to heaven, her hands clasped, and her lips moving in a prayer of thankfulness, whilst De Courcy, as he gazed upon her, thought that, excepting Mary's, he had never beheld so beautiful and so sweet a countenance.

"I will now, Magdalene," said our hero, "introduce your generous protector to you, and he will take you to his house, and there you will see his kind-hearted and beautiful daughter, whom you will love as a sister—for she is as good and pure as she is lovely."

Magdalene raised her liquid eyes to De Courcy's features, her cheek was pale, and for the first time her voice was steady and calm, as she said, "And this beautiful young lady, signor, you speak of, she is very dear to you, is she not ?"

De Courcy, answered calmly and seriously
"She is dearer to me than life itself."

"Then I will love her with my whole heart and soul, and give my life, if necessary, to make her happy," said Magdalene, passionately, and then her eyes were cast down, and bent fixedly upon the carpet.

De Courcy rose from the sofa, looking grave and disturbed, and saying, "I will go for Sir Charles Wharton," left the room.

CHAPTER XV.

“Now tell me, dear Magdalene,” said Mary Wharton, to the young *ci-devant* Lazzaroni girl, “the events of your young life; we have the entire evening to ourselves; Mrs. Arbuthnot and T  rese Garetti have gone to spend the evening at Lady Hasarel’s, and Sir Charles is at a grand banquet at the Marquis De Policastri’s, with the Count De Courcy.”

A week or more had passed since the introduction of Magdalene to the mansion of Sir

Charles Wharton, and in that short time the fair stranger had gained all hearts, by her unaffected sweetness of temper and disposition, her beauty, and the retiring diffidence and modesty of her deportment. Sir Charles, from the very first interview, was firmly persuaded Magdalene was his niece, nothing could shake his belief in Mary being his own child. Magdalene's striking likeness to Mary, in features, and person, was too remarkable to be the mere effect of chance. Mary felt already a sister's affection for her cousin, as she called her in private; and after a day or two's companionship, made Magdalene fully acquainted with the strange circumstances of her own life and the mystification of the kind Sir Charles Wharton with respect to her birth.

Mary, who expected to behold a wild, untaught, Lazzaroni, was astounded when she beheld a young and beautiful girl, with quiet, serious, and well-sustained manners, diffident and timid, excitable, and yet retiring; loving and affectionate in manner, and speaking the

Italian without a particle of the Neapolitan patois dialect. Her likeness to herself she at once perceived, the very tones of her voice struck her forcibly; as to T  rese, she was in raptures, shewed Magdalene every attention and kindness, in fact, if her relationship to Sir Charles had been fully confirmed, she could not have been shown greater affection or attention.

And Magdalene evinced that she appreciated all the kindness she received; to Mary she seemed to devote herself heart and soul, she studied her very look, strove by every act to win her love and confidence, spoke to her unceasingly of Hugh De Courcy, of his love and devotion to her, of his noble nature and generous heart, how grand and graceful his figure, and how calm and beautiful the expression of his features. This all sank into Mary's devoted heart, and she learned very soon to love the gentle Magdalene. One thing pained Sir Charles much, and this was Magdalene's firm faith in the Catholic Church, its rites and its mysteries.

Sir Charles was far, very far from being a bigotted protestant, still it pained him to think that his niece should be of a different persuasion to his daughter.

The name of Magdalene, he had been satisfied, was not the one by which she was christened. Mrs. Hudson, Mrs. Wharton's nurse, said her child was christened Mary, so that niece and daughter were both Mary. To satisfy himself, he wrote to a correspondent in Hamburg, to find out for him the date of his brother's child's birth, and the name she was christened by. One only event occurred during the ten days from the introduction of Magdalene to the mansion of the Baronet, and the opening of this chapter, worthy of notice, and that was the escape of Campobello, the Lazzaroni; he was sent to Plymouth, in charge of two police officers, was securely handcuffed, and, as the men declared, as well watched as any convict ever was, and yet he escaped from the jail of Exeter, where he was lodged for the night, with another prisoner, confined in the same

cell, and neither one nor the other could be traced up to that time; their escape created exceeding excitement amongst the jail officials, as it was one of the most daring and successful on record.

We now return to fair Mary Wharton and Magdalene, seated before a cheerful fire, in the handsome drawing-room of Sir Charles's mansion.

"What I have to tell you of myself, dear Mary," said Magdalene, in reply to Mary's request, "is merely a recital of a few, simple events in a monotonous life; but it will do away with your surprise at finding me what you kindly call so well instructed, and with manners different from what you expected to see in a poor Lazzaroni girl, exposed to a life of terrible degradation and sin, and from which Providence was benignantly pleased to rescue her. It will shew you, also, how and where I first beheld the noble and generous Count de Courcy, but for whom I should long since have ceased to exist."

Mary looked surprised, exclaiming, "Did Hugh save your life? You must have been very young at that time, or he surely would have remembered one so attractive and beautiful. In times past," and Mary sighed, "he used to tell me all the incidents of his life, and yet he never mentioned saving a young girl's life."

Magdalene's eyes drooped, and for a moment she remained silent and abstracted. Mary gazed into her sweet pensive features, in the expression of which there was a something that struck her forcibly, for she started and turned pale, and her hand trembled as she laid it on Magdalene's.

The latter looked up, and the eyes of the two girls met. Magdalene's filled with tears; involuntarily they threw their arms round each other's necks, and for several moments neither spoke. Then Magdalene, looking up, kissed Mary's cheek, and with a cheerful, bright smile, said,—

"Do not be angry, dear, kind Mary, at Magdalene's presumption, in having once dared to feel an affection for the noble De Courcy. It has passed away and for ever from my heart, and henceforth I look upon him as your own, and feel for him the devotion and affection of a sister. Perhaps to allow even that is a presumption in one situated as I am ; but, alas ! we do not always possess the power to rule and govern our feelings or our affections."

More and more surprised at the manner, language, and feelings of Magdalene, Mary could only press her to her own soft, kind heart, and whisper, "Dear Magdalene, how different might have been your fate, had—"

"Hush now, Mary carissime, say no more on that subject ; let it rest, and for ever ; let me tell you my little story—you will understand all then.

"You have never been to Naples, dear Mary, and though I dare say you have often heard talk of the Lazzaroni of that city ; yet you must have a very faint idea of that strange

and extraordinary race—who are born, live and die, without bestowing a thought upon the morrow.

“ I must have been nearly six years old at the time I recollect myself running about the streets and quays of Naples, with, I may fairly say, as small an amount of clothing as could well be dispensed with. I can remember, perfectly well, the kind of life I then led, with dozens of other children. Our parents troubled little about us ; but left us to pick up as much food as was necessary to support life, how and where we could. I know our chief place of resort for the purposes of satisfying our appetites was the quay, where multitudes of people assemble, in the summer time, indeed you may say, it is perpetual summer in Naples, so mild and so soft are the breezes of winter. On the quay a scene of perpetual eating and drinking takes place ; roasting and boiling is always going on ; every twenty or thirty paces you meet little stalls, where water-melons are sold. Upon the paring of these water-melons,

thrown away by the purchaser, we chiefly lived in summer and autumn ; besides, we gathered up ears of the golden maize, and roasted them on the charcoal-fires of some good-natured stall-keeper.

"Then we picked shell-fish, snails, and innumerable other commodities, on which we existed ; when satisfied we lay in the shade, and listened to the street-players, or enjoyed the antics of the numerous mountebanks that congregated in this well-frequented locality ; and when evening came we congregated in groups, huddled together, and slept away the hours of the night, to begin again the same life with the rising sun."

"Good gracious !" interrupted Mary, surprised, "Where were your parents, did you never return to your home ?"

"Home !" said Magdalene, with a look of bitter recollection. "A Lazzaroni has no home ; the streets of Naples and the colonnades of its three hundred churches are the

only homes of the houseless, worthless, vicious, outcast Lazzaroni.

“As a child of six years old, I knew nothing of their lives; for, of course, my only thought then was to find food; sometimes my father Campobello, for such I considered him, would come and take me from amongst the children, and look at me keenly and inquiringly. I was much fairer than any of the other children I played, eat, and slept with. ‘Come Magdalene,’ he would say, ‘you are getting pretty; you shall have a gay ribbon, and I’ll take you to a Festa,’ and he would do so; himself decorated with a few gaudy ribbons, and the females with him, dressed out for that day in some gaudy colours, thrown off the following day; and then half-starved and half-naked, they lay listlessly in the shade, or basked in the sun till a new festa roused them from their fearful indolence.

“I was, perhaps, nearly seven, when I began to feel a strong repugnance to the life I led, and a disgust of my companions, which rapidly

increased, till at length I used to hide from them. One day, a nun belonging to the nunnery of the Annonciada, found me sleeping under the porch of the public chapel attached to the nunnery. She roused me, and taking me by the arm, examined me carefully,

“ ‘ Whose little girl are you ? ’ enquired the nun.

“ ‘ Antonio Campobello’s,’ I answered.

“ ‘ What ! ’ exclaimed the nun, with an air of surprise, ‘ you the child of that turbulent and brutal Lazzaroni—impossible ; you are so fair. Will you come with me, child ? ’ she continued, ‘ we take in young maidens in our convent, and teach them the word of God and instruct them.’

“ ‘ Oh ! ’ I exclaimed, with tears in my eyes, ‘ will you take me ? I hate the life I lead ; I would be good if I could.’

“ ‘ Poor child, come then with me,’ said the nun, ‘ but though it is not right to hide anything from your parents, still you must not

say you are taught by the nuns of the Annonciada to your father, or he would never let you come near us.'

" 'The child of a Lazzaroni never enters our walls; but I know not how it is, you interest me; I cannot believe that you are one of that fearful race.' Not to weary you, dear Mary, with minute details, I will hurry over my narrative. For two years I continued attending the school of the convent, always particularly noticed and cared for by the good nun, Sister Agata. As I was made acquainted with many things, and taught prayers, and the necessity of religious worship, the greater became my horror of the life I was forced to lead; I completely shunned all my former companions, and sought out a secret recess for myself to sleep in. Luckily, my supposed father was occupied with schemes of his own; he was not like the other Lazzaroni in some things; he would never work, it is true, but he was of a bold turbulent character, and gained a complete mastery over the great body of Lazzaroni; .

I never heard of my mother, though I always observed a tall, handsome, fierce mannered female with my father, but she never noticed me, and had several children of her own. I happened to have, as the nun Agata said, 'a very sweet voice.'

"When nine years old, I was noticed by the Abbess, and shortly after I was taken into her presence. To this generous, noble-minded woman, once a lady of rank, I owe the deepest gratitude. She took a most extraordinary liking to me; I was with her constantly; she would talk to me for an hour at a time. She had me instructed in music; and I frequently sung in the chapel of the convent with other well instructed girls. I could read and write, and, oh, how eagerly I sought for knowledge, you cannot think. When I was about eleven years of age, the Abbess wished to take me away entirely from the degraded life I led; I was tall, and no longer fit to be sleeping alone under colonnades or porches. I felt as if there was a spirit within me that raised me

above my condition. When unfortunately for me, my father discovered my mode of life and my visits to the convent—he tore from my back the few articles of decent clothing I had had given me, and threatened, uttering the most fearful imprecations, if ever I entered the walls of the Annonciada again ; he carried or forced me to follow him to the cave beneath the Riveria, where he lived with the tall female I had so often seen with him. This horrid woman treated me like a brute, stripped my arms and neck and washed me all over with a liquid that changed the colour of my skin to a darker hue than even that of the Lazzaroni girls.

“ For three or four weeks I suffered terribly, when, for some crime committed by Campobello, he was forced to fly Naples.

“ I was then again left to myself, I dare not go to the convent, for I was watched ; but one evening the good nun, Agata, gave me a paper, telling me to read it, and do as it bade me.

“ I waited till day-light, and then read,

‘Do not come any more to the convent, we are forbid to receive the children of the Lazzaroni; go to No. 7, Stradi Lucia, and ask to see the Signora Canino. She will know who you are, and will be kind to you for she is my sister.’

“‘Dear, good Sister Agata, how kind,’ I exclaimed, ‘to think of me at all.’ At first I felt ashamed as I looked at my bronzed skin, my scanty attire, my short red petticoat. I blushed to think of going before a stranger. But gaining courage, I went to a well and washed my face and arms, but the stain remained the same; I was not frightened, for I guessed it would not come off without some chemical process or liquid. So making myself look as well as I could, I proceeded to St. Lucia, which is close to the splendid mansions on the Riviera, strange contrast to all this beauty and splendour—the huts of the fishermen, scooped out like caves from the hard rock; dwellings without windows or doors rise up before the princely mansions of the wealthy.

“How often have I sat at night amid the rocks below the Riviera, when the moon stood high in the heavens, gazing in a dreamy stupefaction upon the glorious scene before me, the smoke of Mount Vesuvius tinged by the rays of the bright moon, as it ascended undisturbed by a breath of air; from the open windows of the villas lights gleamed out upon the vine covered terraces; countless numbers of fishing skiffs covered the waters of the glorious bay, some with bright fires in their sterns, to attract the great fishes and lobsters that rise to the light and are caught—for hours I would gaze on this scene, till sleep stole over my weary eyelids; my life was a dream, alas! I dream now,” and Magdalene’s eyes became suffused with tears.

“Dear Magdalene, why give way to those excitable feelings? Strive to forget the past, trust in the love of those whom Providence has raised up to be your protectors; recollect time and unforeseen circumstances may even more

speedily than we imagine, remove the obscurity that clouds our births."

"I do not deserve, dear Mary," answered Magdalene, with a sigh, "the love and kindness shown me; I am not sufficiently grateful for so great a blessing, but please God, I will yet prove more worthy; but to continue my narrative, requesting your pardon for those outbreaks of temper, alas, Mary, I have been more sorely tried than you can dream of."

CHAPTER XVI.

"I proceeded," continued Magdalene, "to Strada Santa Lucia, and stopped before No. 7, it was a very handsome house and a private one.

"This made me more timid, I feared the scorn of the servants, but as I stood fearful of ringing the bell, the door partly opened, and, oh joy, I beheld the mild, pensive countenance of Sister Agata ; with a smile she beckoned to me to come in ; I did so with a joyful heart, for I should not now have to face the Signora Canino alone.

“ ‘ Bless me, Magdalene,’ cried Sister Agata, looking at me with intense surprise, ‘ what have you done to make yourself this colour ?’

“ ‘ My father,’ I replied, ‘ ordered some woman he lives with, to stain my skin because I was fairer than his other children.’

“ ‘ The wretch !’ returned Sister Agata, ‘ but perhaps it would have been for the better ; however, come with me, the colour of the skin makes no difference when the heart is uncorrupted—the skin can be cleansed.’

“ The nun took me up stairs, through an exceedingly well-furnished house, everything looking so orderly and neat. She then opened a door, which led into a very handsomely-furnished saloon, with beautiful costly plants in the verandah, and a folding door leading into a bed-chamber.

“ In a large, well-cushioned, high chair, on wheels, reclined a lady. She turned the chair half-round as we entered the room, and I beheld her face.

“ A sweet and interesting face it was, pale,

very pale, with the dark hair pushed back from the high white forehead ; the lady was dressed in mourning, and did not appear more than two or three and thirty.

“ ‘ Ah,’ said the Signora Canino, gazing at me, earnestly, “ is this your young favourite, sister? I thought you said she was very fair, but she’s pretty enough, notwithstanding. Come near, my child, for it has pleased God to afflict me with the loss of the use of my limbs.’

“ ‘ Ah, my God,’ I exclaimed, touched to the heart, to see one so young and beautiful, for beautiful she was, and her good heart spoke in her eyes, which were lovely.

“ The Signora Canino kissed me, saying, ‘ I am sure you have a feeling heart, and are a good girl, or my dear, kind Agata, would not be so deeply anxious about you. But this is a stained skin, sister,’ continued the Signora, pushing back my hair, which was extremely abundant.”

“ ‘Yes, sister,’ replied the nun, ‘they have stained her skin with walnut juice, I suppose, but it will come off by repeated washings with vinegar or some other acid. I will leave you now, sister, as my hour is expired,’ so kissing the signora, and then me, affectionately, and telling me never to forget my prayers, and to always remember that there is another world to reward us for our trials in this, if they are borne with pious resignation, she returned to her convent.

“ Well, dear Mary, for several reasons, I will speak briefly of the next three years, the memory of that beloved lady, the Signora Canino, still remains engraven on my heart in lines never to be erased. She is now a saint in glory. Peace to her ashes.

“ During those three years I remained entirely with the Signora Canino. She was unmarried, of good family, and had a comfortable annuity, was highly accomplished, a splendid musician, and passionately fond of music. She enjoyed tolerable health, but her limbs

were paralysed from a terrible fall when only two-and-twenty years of age. Still she was exceedingly cheerful, could amuse herself at the piano or harp ; but reading for any length of time affected her in a strange way ; she kept two female domestics, but saw no person, save and except her sister Agata, and they were fondly attached to each other.

“ I was at once domiciled in the house of the Signora, and soon learned to love her dearly. I was handsomely attired and my complexion restored to its natural hue. The signora delighted in teaching me music and every accomplishment she was herself mistress of ; she wished to render me capable of taking the situation of a governess or companion. I loved music dearly, and was, the signora said, a most apt scholar. She had a choice library, and she selected the works she wished me to read to her. Ah, Mary dear, how calm, quiet, and peaceable were those days. I slept in a little bed beside my generous and beloved

protectress ; and I knew, after a time, she loved me fondly.

“ She did not sleep much at night, and I so managed, that I was always awake to get her anything she required, and talk to her, and soothe her when she suffered pain, which was very frequently. We drove out in a large covered carriage twice-a-week, and into this vehicle she was carried chair and all. When two or three miles from Naples, the chair was lifted out, and placed where a fine view could be had, and then I took plenty of exercise.

“ I never went into the streets of Naples, for Sister Agata, who visited us once every week, for one hour, told me my father was come back, and was grown a great popular leader of the Lazzaroni, and that she was sure there would be a revolution in Naples.

“ I was just approaching my sixteenth birthday, as far as I could judge, when my beloved protectress was struck with a mortal distemper, and one fearfully rapid in its progress. It was only then that I understood the signora

had a brother; and most melancholy to relate, at this trying moment, dear sister Agata was absent, having been sent with four other nuns to Gaeta, to the nunnery of the Annunciate in that town, where a terrible fever prevailed.

“ This brother, the Signor Tommaso Canino, held a situation under government; he was, as I afterwards discovered, a bad, vicious man, who in early life cruelly ill used his sisters, but was forced by the will of their father, to allow them a very handsome annuity out of the estates, or give them a sum of 15,000 ducats as their marriage portion.

“ Agata Canino became a nun.; Angelena Canino, my beloved protectress, was to have married a gentleman of good family, and of prepossessing manners and exterior, when the unfortunate fall from her horse, over a steep bank of more than sixty feet, crushed her lower limbs past all recovery.

“ Her intended husband would have fulfilled his engagement, but the Signora

Canino would not listen to his earnest entreaties.

“The sisters never communicated with, or spoke of their brother, on account of his unnatural conduct to them after their father’s death. Seizing the whole property, and refusing them the possession provided them by their parent’s will, it was not till after much suffering, and a long lawsuit, that they gained their cause.

“On the third day of the Signora Canino’s illness, she became extremely anxious for the notary, and one of the domestics was sent for one, but before he arrived, to my consternation, she became speechless, and so continued till she died. Never shall I forget that terrible hour, it was night, I was kneeling by the side of the couch, bedewing with my tears, the hand of my loved protectress, when I felt a grasp upon my shoulder, and a harsh voice, said,

“ ‘Get up, Ragazza, let us see who you are.’

“I started up hearing this strange harsh voice, and gazed bewildered at the speaker ;

he was a man of middle height, a broad, massive, heavy man; oh, and what a forbidding countenance, with great mustachios and whiskers.

“ ‘Well girl,’ he again said, ‘why don’t you speak? Who are you?’

“ ‘I knew not what to say; I was so nervous from the watching of the three last nights, the shock of the signora’s death, and the absence of Sister Agata.

“ ‘That is the little girl my mistress took in from the streets, from charity,’ said the former attendant of the Signora Canino, who had always resented my introduction to the Signora.

“ ‘Ah, corpo de Baccho, a charity-girl from the streets, probably a Lazzaroni. By my faith,’ added this brute, ‘to the streets you must return, my beauty. Have you anything in your pockets belonging to my sister? if you have, turn them out. I am no patroniser of little street scamps.’ ”

Good Heaven !” exclaimed Mary Wharton taking Magdalene’s hand in hers, “What a savage, unnatural brute ; oh, what you must have suffered, Magdalene.”

“Alas ! dear Mary, I can scarcely describe to you my agony and my shame ; for in those eventful three years I had become, as you may suppose, a changed being. Oh, Madonna, when I thought of being turned into the streets without home or shelter, and after three years’ delicate care and luxuries—for luxuries they were to me—and had rendered me quite unfit to brave the reverses of a Lazzaroni’s life. I had no money, for I never required it. I might have put my hand on a considerable sum, always in the house, and from which I usually paid household expenses and tradesmen’s bills ; but I required none myself. To return to this terrible, heartless man.

“ ‘ Well,’ said he, seeing me standing, stupefied and bewildered, ‘ Well, what do you see in me—do you think me such a soft fool as

my sister? Come, take yourself out of this house; it's mine, and all that's in it.'

" 'Ah! signor,' said I, clasping my hands, 'in the name of the blessed Madonna, permit me to accompany my beloved and generous protectress to the grave—

" 'Permit you,' fiercely exclaimed this wretch, 'Permit you to rob me, you mean ——— Begone out of the house, or I'll drive you forth, and give you over to the sbirri as a vagrant little wretch. What brought you here at all?

" The blood rushed to my cheeks and temples; I felt my veins, as it were, bursting; whilst the woman, Maria, stood gazing at me, with a malicious, spiteful look.

" I rushed to the bed, in an agony of passion, and kissed, for the last time, the lips so often pressed with warm affection to mine, and casting on the heartless wretch, who was going to seize me by the arm, to turn me out, a look of bitter scorn and contempt, I said, 'Miserable wretch, the day will come when

you will yet be on the bed of death, without a hand to close your eyes or moisten your lips ; remember !' and, so saying, scarcely conscious of what I said or did, I ran down stairs, seized a shawl, and rushed out into the streets of Naples. I could hear the wretch above crying out—

“ ‘Curse her, she has the malochia—I feel it.’ I could hear him stamp upon the floor with frantic rage.

“ ‘Oh, Madonna, Madonna!’ I repeated to myself, do not abandon me. At the further end of the street was a shrine, lighted in honour of the Virgin Mother. I threw myself on my knees, the bitter tears were scalding my cheeks, as they ran unheeded on the pavement ; I threw back the shawl that covered my bare head, and as I did so, a grasp was laid on my arm, and I was raised up like a child, while a terrible voice rung in my ear, first uttering a fearful malediction. ‘Ah, wretch, have I found you at last?’

“ I raised my eyes, I was fainting ; but be-

fore I became insensible I beheld my father, Antonio Campobello."

"My poor, poor Magdalene," cried Mary, her eyes suffused with tears, "how terrible was your situation."

"Yes, Mary," returned the poor girl, her sweet features wearing a look of such pious resignation, that any one, gazing at her then, would have said she was even more lovely than her companion.

"When I recovered my recollection, for I had fainted, I found myself lying upon a bundle of straw; stripped of my clothes, and the scanty covering of a Lazzaroni girl substituted in their place. Standing near the place where I lay was the same tall, fierce-looking female I had seen before with my father, holding a can of some kind of liquid; she had just been washing me all over with it, and tying up my hair in the Lazzaroni fashion.

"'Oh,' said this woman, 'you are coming to yourself are you? So you wanted to run from your race, and become a dainty damsel, with

fine clothes. You had better take care, and not try that game again, or Antonio will cripple you, mind that;' and she looked like a fiend as she turned away. I perceived I was in one of the caves of the Riviera. I thought my heart would break; but there's no use, dear Mary, in prolonging my narrative; I have shown you how I became as you now see me; the next year and half of my life is too horrible to dwell upon.

"This terrible woman, the wife of Campobello, if wife you can call the degrading compact that joined them, took me out in a fishing boat to bait hooks, and assist her and her eldest son, who did do some work sometimes. We were upset in a squall, running for the quay, one evening; I was just sinking, and was uttering my last prayer, when a powerful arm grasped me, held me up, and carried me ashore. I was saved from drowning by Captain De Courcy, who then commanded the "Vesuvius" brig. Though life was hateful,

I felt too young to die, and hope still lingered in my heart, that Providence would snatch me from my terrible doom.

“ Besides saving my life, this generous, noble-minded man, left a sum of money for my use.

“ I saw Captain De Courcy several times for he was often pointed out to me as he went to his boat, but he had no recollection of me. He sailed shortly after for Genoa ; time, rolled on, I saw no mode of escape ; I was terrible watched. I overheard many conferences, between my father and some strangers, in the cave at night ; and I soon learned that he had become a conspirator. I pass on till the return of Captain De Courcy to Naples. I overheard a plan between several of the Lazzaroni and my father, to assassinate Captain De Courcy, under the colonnades of the church of Gesu Novo, as he returned from the Palace Reale, on the night of a particular festa, that of Piedi Grotto.

“ I knew not what to do to save him, but I

I watched the manœuvres of my father that night, and discovered that he intended to surround Mr. De Courcy, with the girls and women singing and dancing, and as if to extort money, and then to stab him."

"My shriek—for you have told me, how he related the event to you in Genoa—my shriek saved him, and for which I received a blow in the neck that nearly killed me. Afterwards I contrived to discover the conspiracy of entering fifty determined revolutionists on board his ship, with the hope of taking his life and seizing the vessel; the first Lieutenant, Baracco, being a conspirator. I was enabled, only by hiding all night, and watching closely, to warn Captain De Courcy of this conspiracy against him.

"The discovery of Lieutenant Baracco being a conspirator, I suppose, led to the flight and arrest of the others. In the dead of the night my father forced me to follow him; he put off in a fishing boat, and with me was put on board a vessel sailing for England; thus

dear Mary, you have a brief outline of my life I have suppressed much, for it would only pain your gentle heart to hear of my terrible sufferings and privations for eighteen months. It was not till seven months after her death, that I heard that dear, kind-hearted Sister Agata died of the pestilence at Gaeta; for many a long day I mourned over her loss, for I had daily expected to see her, and to her I trusted to escape from the frightful life I endured in Naples."

CHAPTER XVII.

DESPATCHES for the Marquis De Policastri had arrived in London, via Hamburgh. For certain reasons it had been determined by the court of Naples, that the Marquis was to remain in England till recalled; whilst the "Serena" frigate was to return to Palermo as soon as possible. This intelligence and orders were received by our hero with surprise and some vexation, as it hurried his movements. He was extremely anxious to see Lord Umfre-

ville, and accordingly wrote to him, that he should be obliged to leave London in eight or ten days, and that he would, if his lordship could not leave Hampshire, visit him there. But Lord Umfreville arrived in London the very day he wrote the letter, and immediately waited on the Count De Courcy.

The two friends met, after so many years separation, with a cordiality unimpaired. Lord Umfreville looked very pale, and in his manner was depressed.

After some conversation on the rather sudden death of the late Lord, and how deeply he deplored the loss of the best of fathers, his lordship said, "Before, my dear Hugh, we begin to talk of other matters, let me set your heart at rest upon one subject, which I know is of more consequence to you than all others—I mean respecting my engagement with Miss Wharton—I now know all; and when I learned the particulars, I immediately wrote to Sir Charles and to Miss Wharton, breaking off all engagements between us. Your beau-

tiful Mary is an angel. I can now understand her evident reluctance to receive even common attention from the numerous admirers her beauty and sweet retiring manners attracted; but being quite ignorant of her previous engagement to you—though I perceived she only received my attentions as a particular friend, of her uncle's—I was led on by the hope that time would alter her feelings towards me; therefore when Sir Charles Wharton, then supposed dying, placed her hand within mine, I vowed to study every wish of hers through life and earn the love I hoped one day to gain. The delusion is dissipated, I understand the past; and believe me, Hugh, in my heart I wish you every felicity with one calculated to render the man whom she blesses with her hand, the happiest of human beings."

"My dear Edward," cried our hero, considerably moved by the straight-forward, noble conduct of Lord Umfreville, "I did not interrupt you, or make any remark till you had said what you wished; but, believe me, I have suffered a great deal on this subject; not alone

I assure you, on my own account, but for the pain I foresaw I had inflicted on you. It is I who am to blame throughout in this affair ; my hasty, passionate temper, caused me to act with insane precipitation. You say you know the particulars ; but you cannot be aware how basely I was betrayed."

"You shall tell me another time, dear friend," observed his lordship, I know you were sorely tried ; but now let us turn to another subject, distressing and perplexing to me to a painful degree. I wrote you shortly after my lamented father's death, and made you acquainted with the remarkable words he made use of when dying.

"Now it is very evident that there exists some connection relative to this mystery between you, my father, and Sir John Acton, the minister of King Ferdinand. Whatever it is I should wish to know it. I intend proceeding to Palermo, and will, if you permit me, accompany you in your ship."

"You delight me," exclaimed our hero, eagerly ; there is scarcely anything would give me

greater pleasure. But perhaps I have it in my power to throw some light on this matter ; I say perhaps, for the contents of the papers I now intend examining, are quite strange to me, these papers were given to me by Sir John Acton, previous to leaving Naples, to open and examine their contents on reaching England. They are to reveal the secret of my birth, and prove my rights to my father's name, whatever that was. Your father and Sir John Acton were extremely intimate, and I am led to believe, from some expressions Sir John made use of in parting, that I shall find a relative in you, my dear and old companion."

"Good God ! I thought so myself ;" said Lord Umfreville, considerably agitated, "from my father's words ; but let us, dear Hugh, examine these papers ; strange ideas float through my brain, and recollections of many things, unheeded at the time, now recur forcibly."

"We will do so at once," replied De Courcy.

This conversation took place in our hero's chambers, and, proceeding to a very handsome desk, he opened it and took out the carefully-sealed packet.

Breaking the seals, and unfolding the outward cover, the young men perceived that the packet contained several folds of paper ; Lord Umfreville drew near to the table, anxiously watching his friend's proceedings.

There were six separate documents and several papers enclosed, on the top was a letter directed to Hugh De Umfreville.

Our hero dropped the letter, and looked into the face of his friend with a troubled expression. Lord De Umfreville was pale, but his features wore a calm, serious expression.

"Go on, dear friend, go on," he said, "I am quite prepared to see in you the real Lord Hugh De Umfreville."

"No," replied our hero, firmly, "that must not be, if even it were the case ; 'tis bad enough to probe the heart of a true friend in one sense, without robbing him of title and station. No, let all be unknown," and gathering up the papers, with a somewhat passionate gesture, he would most likely have thrown them into the fire, had not Lord De Umfreville caught him by the arm.

“Your impetuosity, dear Hugh, once before nearly sacrificed your happiness; give not way to an impulse that too often leads to regret; listen to me. By the side of my dying father’s couch I solemnly vowed to do that which was right, and as God hears us, and has registered my vow, and as I hope for peace here on earth and hereafter in heaven, so will I keep my vow.”

There was a solemnity, and a deep feeling in the tone and look of the young man as he spoke, that touched our hero’s heart forcibly.

“Would that I had never sought to know my name,” he bitterly exclaimed, “that of De Courcy was a noble one and has not been disgraced by me. I covet neither titles nor wealth; I desired to give her I loved a name she would have a right to hold, and her children, if God blessed us with them, to inherit after us; false pride, for one title is as good as another.”

“No Hugh,” rejoined his friend, “you argue falsely. I do not deny but that one appellation is as good as another, when upheld with hon-

our and integrity; but no man has a right to cast away his name and birth-right from a false feeling; be calm and just; read that letter to the end and let us understand our relative positions. I may lose title and property, but I should retain my self-esteem, which now I could never do, if I knew, or suspected, that I held that which I was not entitled to possess."

Our hero looked exceedingly uneasy and disturbed, but taking up the letter of Sir John Acton, he read aloud as follows:—

"‘My dear Hugh,—If I followed the dictates of my own heart, I would leave you in ignorance of who you are, and who were your parents, and most probably remaining in ignorance of the past would most conduce to your happiness; but circumstances have occurred, that have induced me to change my mind. Your father and I were bosom friends; in memory of him who was so cruelly treated, I did my duty towards you as if I had been your father.

‘At this time, I refrain from giving you any of my reasons for acting as I have done, and

simply confine myself to making you acquainted with facts, and enclosing a few vouchers, and certificates of your father's marriage and your birth ; being ready at any time to come forward and swear to the truth of what I now state, and also to produce witnesses if required.

' Your grandfather was the Lord Hugh De Umfreville, of Grena, county of Kerry, and Umfreville Castle, Hampshire, and various other estates in England. He had one son by his first wife. This son became a Roman Catholic, and his father disinherited him ; married again and had another son, to whom he bequeathed all his estates.'

" There, my dear friend," interrupted Lord Umfreville, " your protector, Sir John Acton, is quite wrong ; but go on, I will explain afterwards."

Our hero continued, "' This son by his second wife died before he became of age, consequently, the title and estates went, by right of succession, to Lord De Umfreville's

younger brother, Edward De Umfreville—the present lord, whose eldest son was your companion in the college at Sienna. There is also a younger son, in the naval service of Great Britain. Now with respect to your father, before he was disinherited he was devotedly attached to a Miss De Courcy, eldest daughter of the oldest baronet in Ireland, and an exceedingly wealthy land-holder in the county of Cork and Kerry.

‘ On your father becoming a Roman Catholic, and his father, Lord De Umfreville disinheriting him, Sir Egbert De Courcy, a stern Protestant, and a great persecutor of the Catholics of that day—a period when they were cruelly oppressed—instantly forbade his daughter seeing her former lover ; nevertheless, your sire carried her off. Of their after unhappy, deserted condition, I know nothing further than that your mother died in giving you birth, and your father, two years after, struggling to the last to maintain the liberty of the Catholic subjects of Ireland from their

oppressing Protestant brethren, and the cruel laws then existing against them.

‘ I have already told you how, on returning to Ireland, I made it my business to find out all this, and to trace you, for I had discovered that my poor friend left an only son. Now, to the Umfreville property and title, you thus see, you can never succeed, as your father was disinherited, being a Catholic, and besides, your grandfather executed deeds purposely to cut your father or his heirs off from all chance of succession. But it strikes me, from what I heard from the present Lord Umfreville, whom I made acquainted with your existence—for he was quite ignorant of it—.’ ”

“ Ah, my God ! ” interrupted Lord Umfreville, in a tone of anguish, “ now I understand my poor father’s anxiety. Ah ! who is perfect ? but proceed, I pray you, dear friend ; pardon these interruptions.”

“ ‘ That the fortune of your mother is unquestionably yours. She was of age when she married your father, and her fortune was

£40,000, which was unjustly added to her sister's portion when she married Lord Eglin, whose son now enjoys that large property--- for your mother inherited this £40,000 from her grandfather.

‘ This intelligence was my chief inducement for altering my intention of your inspecting the contents of this packet when you pleased, to doing so on reaching England.

‘ With the enclosed documents, any highly respectable lawyer will tell you what chance you have of recovering this property of your mother's. I have said sufficient now on this subject. May God direct you as to the best course to pursue ; you have my hearty wishes for your success, and my blessing.

“ Ever your affectionate friend,

“ JOHN ACTON.

“ Naples, May 29th, 1801.”

Our hero laid down the letter, and rested his head on his hand in a very thoughtful mood.

"Now listen to me, Hugh," said Lord Umfreville, as we shall still suppose him to be, to avoid confusion, "I remarked to you, as you read that letter, that Sir John Acton was incorrect in his view of the past, but quite right as to your birth, &c. ; I will explain my words. Your grandfather, Hugh De Umfreville did marry again, but the son he had by his second wife died the day of his birth—another and another, strange to say, died the same way ; the last nearly cost the mother her life. Indeed, from the effects of that confinement she never entirely recovered, and only survived her aged husband eighteen months.

"Whether Lord De Umfreville was struck with remorse or not, I cannot say ; but the deeds disinheriting his only son, then dead, were never found, but it was supposed, and such was the case, no doubt, that he destroyed them. My grandfather therefore came into possession of title and estates, as next in succession ; for it appears either you were not supposed to

be in existence, or were not thought of at all. Lord Eglin certainly married your mother's sister; he was then a very poor nobleman, but with the immense property he inherited in right of his wife, he purchased back the forfeited estates of his grandfather, which his son the present Lord Eglin holds.

"Now after the lapse of so many years it's a question whether your claims to your mother's property would be recognized."

"My dear friend," interrupted our hero, "I never intend to try the case. I have not the slightest wish or ambition to disturb the succession of any man, inheriting property in direct descent, without any fraud on his part; therefore, as I have quite sufficient for my wants, and I know Mary will inherit more than sufficient for her and any children she may have, I sincerely hope, and I implore you to do so, to let things remain as they are."

Lord Umfreville shook his head, with a serious smile, saying, "Your romantic ideas, Hugh, would suit the wild age when the name

of De Courcy was the war cry of a valliant race. You must assert your claims ; if you despise a title, so do I, especially when I am aware I am holding one unjustly. Your succession to titles and estates I will not dream of disputing for no doubt these documents here are clear and convincing. My poor father's words prove to me, he was aware of the fact, and I am also satisfied, he was, just before he died, investigating papers and deeds, preparatory to the renunciation of the property and title. But do not imagine, that I shall be left without sufficient means for a gentleman's support. I shall be quite rich enough ; my grandfather's property was very considerable, before he inherited the title and estates of his brother, and he had, besides, a very large fortune with his wife. My mother, also, was an heiress. She was a De Vere, so that you see, I shall remain wealthy still. My younger brother embraced the naval profession from choice and love of the sea, but is handsomely provided for out of his mother's marriage portion.

Hugh De Courcy was nevertheless extremely hurt and troubled ; could he have imagined for a moment that his opening the packet and investigating the mystery of his birth, would disinherit his friend, he would never have attempted to satisfy a very natural feeling, that of knowing whose son he was.

From his knowledge of Lord Umfreville's character, he felt quite satisfied that once convinced of his having no right to the title and estates of Umfreville, persuasion would never induce him to retain them.

These thoughts passed rapidly through our hero's brain. Therefore, looking up, with a saddened expression of countenance, he said, laying his hand upon his friend's,

" This is a severe trial on both sides ; for I feel so satisfied respecting your opinions of me and my feelings, that I may venture to speak as I do, without fear of being thought visionary in my ideas and of your so asserting.

" Will you then, dear friend—should the law pronounce my claims strictly just and well-

founded—will you ease my mind by dividing those estates equally. If you refuse me, you disparage our friendship, and render the succession one of melancholy regret.”

“Be it as you wish, Hugh,” returned Lord Umfreville, clasping his friend’s hand, and pressing it warmly, “on this promise, that if I die childless, the estates return to either you or your heirs.”

De Courcy, with a pleased smile, assented, saying, “I prophesy, dear Edward, that will not be the case. But I have another request to make, and that is, that you will still keep to your promise of accompanying me to Palermo.”

“Willingly, for I wish to leave England for a time. Now let us look over these documents, and to-morrow place them in the hands of the most eminent lawyer of the day, Sir Edward D———.”

The two friends then calmly turned over the papers, and after their perusal, both felt





